argosy

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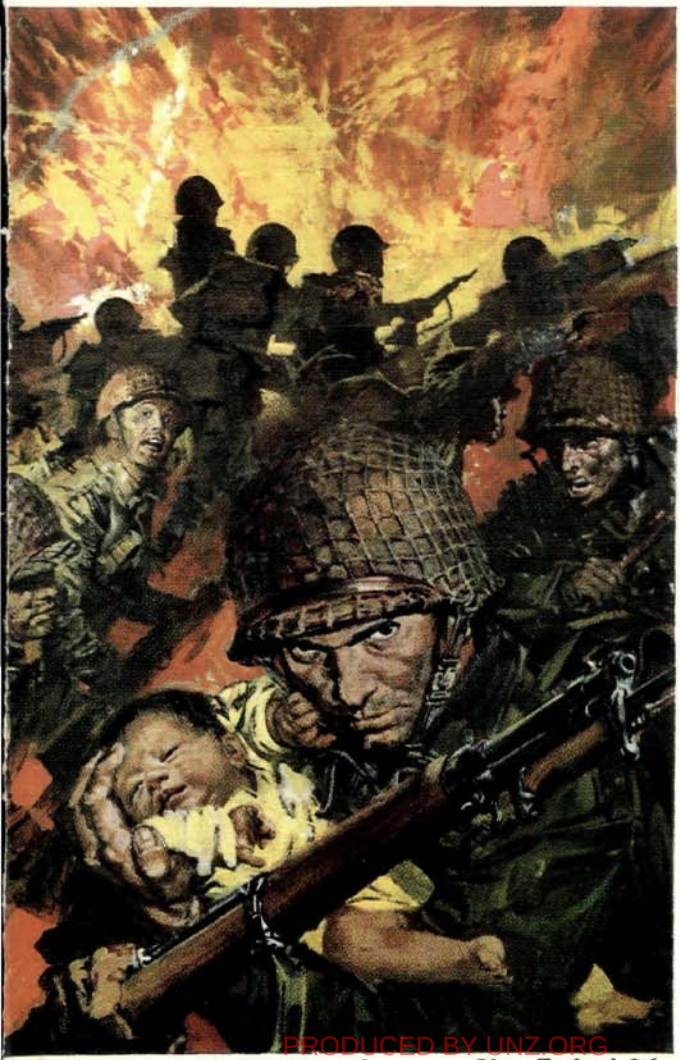

TWELVE VIVID STORIES

GERALD KERSH

RHYS DAVIES

ANDREW GARVE'S NEW NOVEL BEGINS

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argosy

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Over now to you

Mr. GARVE GOES TO MOSCOW

HOWEVER vivid a fiction writer's imagination may be, there is no substitute for first-hand knowledge when it comes to telling a story that is set in faraway places. The man who knows, because he has been there and seen for himself, can weave a special spell of authenticity that gives an extra excitement to the adventures of his make-believe characters.

And so when we at Argosy heard that Andrew Garve had written a new thriller set in Russia, we were more than usually interested because we knew he was one of the few Western novelists with a close personal knowledge of that vast, and often baffling, country.

In Garve's new thriller the action sweeps from Moscow, through the Ukraine, and down to the Black Sea, and every step of the way you have the feeling that this is written by someone who has been there and seen for himself. (Don't take our word for it: turn to page 124 and read on.)

Andrew Garve first went to Russia as long ago as 1928, when he spent a year there on a travelling scholarship after graduating in economics at London University. After some years as a journalist in London (during which he found time to publish his first novel at the age of 21), he went back to Russia the hard way—by wartime Arctic convoy in 1942—and spent three years as correspondent of the *News Chronicle* and BBC broadcaster.

In a sense, it was Russia which caused the turning point in Garve's life. His despatches from Moscow had been subject to censorship. Back in London after the war, there were some not-so-happy aspects of life under Stalin that he wanted to write about. He did not see eye-to-eye with the newspaper for which

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he then worked. There were rows—and Andrew Garve resigned and changed from newspaperman to full-time author.

Since then, he has become known as a master of exciting plots. His books have been translated into most languages and published in 20 countries. Many have been filmed, and on TV.

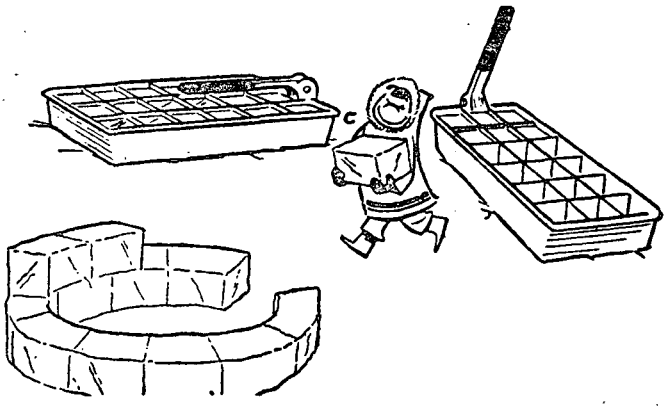
If you like meeting authors, you would find Garve a quiet-spoken, calm man, with the unsurprised ease of manner that comes to the widely travelled.

He usually works in London, and takes about six months over a book. "At first," he says, "it's always very slow. When I start a book, I'm fed up and bored with it. Then, when I get to know the characters and the story starts rattling along, I get so interested that I can't do or think about anything else at all. I leap out of bed early in the morning to get to the typewriter, and never want to stop to sleep."

He tries to work mainly in the winter, and this leaves the summer free for travelling and for his main interest outside his writing—exploring tidal creeks and saltings in small boats. His favourite stamping-ground: the East Coast. His last boat: a six-tonner, named *Leanda*, after the heroine of one of his books.

Don't look him up in the telephone book: "Andrew Garve" is a pseudonym. "I was driving in Scotland," he says, "and wondering about a pen-name, when I came across a village called Garve. Andrew seemed to go with it. That's all."

His new book, *The Ashes of Loda*, is already causing a stir on both sides of the Atlantic. It will not be published in Britain until April. But, because Argosy tries to bring you the best fiction first, a two-part serialisation, entitled *Moscow Assignment*, begins in this issue.



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THE GEORGE COMPANY BABY

by

EDMUND G. LOVE

IT was just after dark when Stoke called me to his foxhole and told me I'd have to take my platoon up the line to Fox Company. When you move at night the main thing is to keep quiet, so I told my men that the first guy that opened his mouth was going to get his head bashed in.

After we'd gone about half a mile we came to this cutting where the railway line goes through a big hill. I was in the lead and Sergeant Blasingame was bringing up the rear. There were fourteen of us left in the platoon at that time. I got almost all the way through the cutting when I heard this noise like a baby crying. Well, you never know about those things. It could have been a Jap signalling.

I knew by the way the rest of the men were looking up that whatever it was, was up on top of the hill somewhere. I poked Jamieson and Bergen and motioned to them to follow. Then I began to climb up the bank.

It had been raining and the bank was slippery and muddy, so that climbing was hard. About halfway, I grabbed a bush to pull myself up. The next thing I knew, I was lying down there in the ditch, trying to get the mud out of my ears. I heard a hissing. Anybody could have heard it, including the Japs in Shuri Castle.

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It was Jamieson. " Hey, Hoppy," he whispered after his hissing made me look up, " there's a cave here."

I told him to shut up. Then I grabbed Mogoluski's arm because Mogoluski had a torch. We climbed up the hill and I grabbed the torch and stuck it in the hole while Jamieson looked around. The noise came again, from inside the cave.

Jamieson whispered, " It's full of people and they all look like they committed suicide."

" They ain't all dead," I told him.

Mogoluski crawled inside the cave and was gone three or four minutes. When he came back he was carrying a bundle in his arms.

" Guess what I've got," he said. " A real live baby. Its mother was shot. That's what was making the noise."

" I guess that settles that." I started sliding back down the hill. " Let's get going."

Mogoluski just stood there. " Hey, Hoppy," he said, loud, " what are we going to do with this here baby? "

" You open your mouth like that once more," I whispered back at him, " and you won't have to do anything. I'll shoot you myself."

He came sliding down beside me. He looked as if he was going to cry. " What do we do with it? " he whispered.

" There's nothing we *can* do with it," I told him. " Just put it down somewhere, and let's get going. We're late now."

" You mean you want me to leave this little baby here by the railway? " he asked.

" That's what I said," I told him.

" It'll freeze to death," he said. " Or maybe it'll starve. Or maybe the wolves will get it."

" Listen," I told him, " we are in the middle of a war. There are trigger-happy guys all around us. If that baby lets out one single little yell, our goose is cooked."

That's when Jamieson got in the argument. " Couldn't we just take it along with us and turn it in to the first battalion aid station we come to? " he asked. " Of course we'd do something to keep it from crying first."

" Just what would you do? " I asked.

" I don't know," Jamieson said. " We'll ask Giovanni. He's got a kid." He turned round and whispered to the guy behind him. The next thing I knew, Giovanni came walking up.

" Giovanni," Jamieson asked him, " what makes a baby cry? "

" They're either hungry or they're uncomfortable," Giovanni told him. " Maybe it wants changing."

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" Well, let's see," Mogoluski said. He started to hand over the baby.

" Look, you men," I told them, " if we don't get going, we're going to have Captain Jonas on our necks. Now, put the baby down."

" Aw, stop it, Hoppy," Giovanni told me. He knelt down and started unwrapping the baby. In a minute he looked up. " It's a girl," he said, " and I was sure right about her being uncomfortable. No wonder she was crying." He threw a rag into the ditch. " Now we got to find another pair for her."

" Don't look at me," Mogoluski told him. " Mine won't fit her."

" Aw, you big idiot," Giovanni told him, " I want an undershirt. You got an extra one? "

" I've got one," Bergen said, and reached in his pack. Giovanni wrapped it around the baby. Then he lifted up the bundle and put it in Jamieson's knapsack. Jamieson looked like one of those Okinawan women with the baby perched up there. " Now we can get going, Hoppy," Giovanni told me.

I motioned with my arm and started down the cutting. I took about a dozen steps when the baby cut loose again. You could have heard that baby yell clear over in China. I stopped and walked back along the line to Jamieson.

" My brother-in-law used to walk his kid when it cried at night," Mogoluski was saying.

" What do you think I was doing with it? " Jamieson said.

" Listen, you two guys," I said to them. " Just put the baby down, and forget about it."

It was about then that Giovanni came up from the rear of the line. " That ditch ain't no doorstep, Hoppy," he told me. " There ain't no kind old lady going to come out and rescue this baby." He shook his head and looked at Jamieson. " There must be some way to keep it quiet."

" You said we could feed her," Bergen said. " I got an extra box of K-rations on me."

" Nope," Giovanni said. " This baby's got to have milk."

" One of you guys run down to the grocery store and get a bottle of milk," I told them.

" Don't get so cynical, Hoppy," Giovanni told me.

" I've got an idea," Mogoluski said.

" Why is it that the dumbest guy in his platoon is always the one that has the ideas? " I asked him. " I've got an idea too. I already told you what it is. Get rid of that baby ! "

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" The other day, when Norton got his leg shot off, Greenberg gave him a shot," Mogoluski said. " Norton never even let out a whimper. Maybe we could give the baby a shot."

" You mean morphine? " Bergen asked. " Man, do you want to make an addict out of her? "

" It's a case of making an addict out of her, or a corpse," Jamieson told them.

" Well," Giovanni said, " let's ask Doc Greenberg."

They passed the word down the line and pretty quick Greenberg came walking up. He was the first aid man for our platoon.

" I don't know whether it would be good for her or not," Greenberg said.

" We ain't got time to take the question to any medical convention," I told him. " Make up your mind. We either give the baby a shot, or we park her under a bush."

" We give her the shot," Greenberg said.

Well that took about twenty minutes. First, Greenberg had to ask around to find out how big Norton was. After finding out that Norton was six feet, two inches, and the baby was twenty inches, and figuring out that he would have to give the baby two drops of morphine, we had to build a tent out of some packs so he could turn on a torch to measure out the stuff. I kept telling them to hurry, but it didn't do a bit of good.

" She's sleeping like a baby," Mogoluski said, after Greenberg was finished.

" She is a baby, you dope," Giovanni said.

We were about forty-five minutes late getting up to Fox Company. I thought that Captain Jonas would be mad, but I didn't realise how mad. He told me that I had jeopardised the whole front line while I was having a good time. He told me that in the morning he was going to have my stripes. He told me a lot of other things.

" Get over there in those foxholes," he told me. " There's a machine-gun section along the road from How Company and you check with them. I'll see you in the morning."

That was that. I got the men all settled and was just getting ready to climb into my own foxhole when Jamieson came over to me.

" What do you want to do with the baby? " he asked.

" You know what I want to do with the baby," I told him.

" Leave her under a bush, I know," he said, " but I was just wondering whether maybe I should go over and ask Captain Jonas for permission to take her to the first aid station."

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" You stay away from Captain Jonas," I told him. " We're in enough trouble with him already."

" Well, should we dig a foxhole for her, or should we keep her in one of ours? Or maybe you want her in your foxhole."

" Just keep her as far away from me as you can," I told him.

I had the first watch and about one o'clock in the morning I was just dozing off when somebody shook me by the shoulder. I rolled over and put my rifle up to my shoulder and opened my eyes to look for the Japs. There weren't any. It was Jamieson shaking me.

" You got any spare undershirts? " he asked.

" No," I said to him, right out loud. Then I realised about the talking and I whispered to him. " Get back in your foxhole."

" If you haven't got any spare shirts," he told me, " give me the one you've got on."

" You mean the shirt I'm wearing? " I asked.

" Sure," he said. " The baby's got the stomach-ache pretty bad and Giovanni says we need all we can find."

" I won't give it to you," I told him.

" Aw, come on," he said.

" You get back in your foxhole," I told him. " I've only got fourteen men in this platoon. I don't want to lose you."

" Not until I get the shirt," he told me.

So I had to give him the shirt off my back. All the rest of the night I could hear one or another of those guys crawling around taking shirts away from people.

When daylight came, Captain Jonas didn't even wait for me to get out of my foxhole before he was right over.

" Without any doubt," he told me, " this is the worst platoon in the United States Army. What did you men think you were doing over here all night, holding a party? It's a wonder the whole Japanese army's not wrapped around my command post. You certainly issued an invitation to them."

" I didn't notice anything," I told him.

" Didn't notice anything? " I thought he was going to explode. Then he calmed down and looked at me, real sly-like. "Well," he said, " I'll give you half an hour to get going."

" I can't get out of here quick enough," I told him. " In George Company, at least we don't get bawled out for every little thing."

" You aren't going back to George Company," he told me. " You're going to help us in our attack."

" Now wait," I told him. " Nobody said anything about any attack. I was told to bring my platoon up here to fill a hole."

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"That was the original idea," he said. "I asked for you because Stoke said you'd been up the road and had found a way into that little town by the back door. I was going to get you to show me how you got in there, but during the night, while you men were fooling around over here, I got thinking that you were fresher than any of my own men, so I rang up the Colonel and asked if I could use you. He said yes."

What we had to do was crawl up a ditch beside the main road until we came to a stream about four hundred yards away. Then we had to crawl up the stream for another quarter of a mile to a little town that was over in front of our battalion. We'd been trying to capture that town for three days, but the Japs had a couple of machine-guns that pretty well swept the field in front of it. Every time anybody tried to get across, the machine-guns would open up and pin us down, then the mortars would open up and clobber us. The day before, my platoon found this way into town by the stream, but we didn't get all the way in before we were discovered and had to get out again. The way Captain Jonas explained it to me now was that we were to get up there and wait. Then Fox Company was going to make a mock attack across the field. While the Japs were busy with Fox Company, we were to come in and get them from behind.

I started to brief my assistant, Sergeant Blasingame, when Jamieson came over to me. "What do we do with the baby?"

"The next time you mention that baby to me," I told him, "I'm going to shoot you where you stand. In case you're interested, it was the baby that got us into this attack."

"I don't know about that," Jamieson told me, "but we've got to do something with her."

"You do anything you please," I told him, "but don't tell me about it."

I started up the ditch about seven-thirty. I told Blasingame to space the men about ten yards apart and to tell them to keep their distance until I motioned to them to close up. The stream bed was narrow enough and deep enough so that the Japs couldn't see me from the town, but I had to stay on my hands and knees all the way. When I got up to the last turn before the stream ran into the town, I sat down to rest and to wait for the artillery to start. After I made sure that no Japs were watching, I motioned for the man behind me to come up. He did, and nothing happened, so I motioned for the next one. It wasn't until the eighth or ninth man came splashing up the stream that I saw Jamieson. There he came, with that baby asleep in his knapsack.

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" You dumb ox," I told him. " What's the idea of bringing that baby up here? "

" I wasn't going to leave her under a bush to get run over or shot. I'm responsible for this baby."

" And I'm responsible for you," I told him. " Don't you realise that one peep out of that baby will sink us all? "

Giovanni said, " If it will make you feel any better, I'll get Greenberg up here and have him give her another shot."

He turned around and motioned. Pretty soon Greenberg came splashing up the stream.

They told him what they wanted

" Nope," Greenberg said. " I can't do it."

" What do you mean, you can't do it? "

" In the first place, I haven't got any morphine left. In the second place, I think she's had enough. What she really needs is something to eat. The way things are now, everything is going out with nothing coming in."

" This is a fine time to reach that conclusion," I told him. " Why didn't you say that before these guys got this baby up here? "

" Because nobody asked me."

It was then that the artillery concentration started falling in the village. A whole battalion was firing shells in there. The whole place was full of smoke and dust and fire and I was just congratulating myself that I wasn't in it when Mogoluski pulled the sleeve of my jacket and pointed.

Well, out there at the back of the village was a goat which must have broken loose when the artillery started, because it was dragging a big chain with a stake on the end.

" What's that got to do with us? " I asked.

" You've been yapping because the baby might wake up. Greenberg says the baby needs some milk," he told me. " Goats give milk. That's a goat. We ought to go and catch it."

" Have you gone crazy? " I asked him.

" No," he said. " We could catch that goat in about three minutes. That chain dragging ain't going to let it go very far."

" And what do you think the Japs would be doing while you're chasing that goat? "

" You don't have to worry about the Japs," he said. " They're all buried in their little holes, waiting for this artillery to finish. They're not going to be sticking their heads out while that's going on."

I wasn't going to let those idiots go out there and get any goat, and I was just about to tell him so when the baby started yelling.

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There just wasn't anything I could do but tell them they could go ahead.

" I'm not assigning anybody to this job, though," I told them. " Whoever goes out there goes out on his own hook."

The next thing I knew almost the whole platoon jumped up out of the stream and went running across the field towards the goat. About the only men left in the ditch were Sergeant Blasingame and Greenberg and me. Greenberg had the baby so he couldn't go. Well, they had just got up to the goat when it gave a jump backwards. And that's when the artillery fire stopped. And there was my whole platoon out in that field, in plain sight of all the Japs when they came up out of their holes. The stream wasn't going to be a very healthy place when the Japs started shooting.

I told Greenberg to take the baby and get back towards the road and I told Sergeant Blasingame to follow me into the town and find some cover. I told him to stay hidden until we found out what the Japs were going to do.

There wasn't anywhere much to hide in that town, but there was one tree and I didn't think the Japs would be looking for an American in a tree, so I climbed up into it. I didn't have to wait very long to find out what was going to happen. In about two minutes I heard some jabbering and there came four Japs down the street. They were carrying a machine-gun between them. Every now and then I saw one of them point out towards the field where my men were. The funny thing about it was that none of the men in the platoon seemed to realise that the artillery had stopped firing, they were so busy with what they were doing.

The Japs ran to a spot about twenty yards away from me, and put the machine-gun down. Two of them started squatting down behind it. That's when I just dropped out of the tree and I let them have a whole clip from my sub-machine-gun. I didn't even have time to take aim. I just fired from the hip. I didn't get all of them. I got three. The other one swung round and brought his rifle up and got off a shot at me. It hit me in the shoulder. It wasn't much of a wound, but it burnt, and it bled. I was trying to reload, and while I was doing it the Jap dived for the machine-gun and tried to turn it round. That was when Sergeant Blasingame came to life. He was behind a wall, somewhere, and he emptied a clip from his rifle and the Jap keeled over. I ran over and grabbed the bolt out of the machine-gun and dropped a grenade under it so that nobody could use it again, then I made a dive for the wall where Sergeant Blasingame was.

There wasn't much use trying to hide the fact that we were in town after that. A couple of bullets pinged in at us and I figured

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from the volume of fire, that there couldn't be more than about five Jap riflemen, and I knew that they wouldn't cause us much trouble because they had to expose themselves to shoot. So I told Sergeant Blasingame we'd better find ourselves a big wall to get behind and wait for them to give themselves away.

We crawled along on our bellies until we found the wall of a house. I was just telling Sergeant Blasingame what to do next when I heard a racket behind me, people running and all that. I turned round and here came my whole platoon. Mogoluski was in the lead and he was thundering along on his big, flat feet, carrying the goat in his arms. All the rest of them were behind him, with Greenberg and the baby bringing up the rear. Both the goat and the baby were yelling at the tops of their voices. Everybody came sliding in behind the wall and Mogoluski plumped the goat down on the ground.

" There," Mogoluski said, just as if nothing had happened.

" You're just lucky," I told him, and pointed at the machine-gun.

" Who did that? " he asked.

" I did it," I told him. " They were going to shoot you while you were out there chasing that goat."

He looked at me, then at the gun. " You don't look like any hero to me," he said. He turned and looked at the other men, then rubbed his hands. " Well," he said, " let's get going here. We've got to get this baby fed."

" Never mind the baby," I told Mogoluski. " The baby can wait. This isn't a nursery school. We've got work to do."

" But you wanted to keep it from crying so they wouldn't discover we were here."

" Everybody knows we're here," I told him.

I squatted down with Sergeant Blasingame and I gave him six men, including Glowski, with the flame-thrower, and told him to circle round the back edge of the town and go after the mortars. I was going to take the rest, including Lopez with the Browning automatic rifle, and go after that other machine-gun which was up in the front part of the village. I'd just finished telling everybody what to do when Mogoluski stuck his oar in.

" Ain't you going to leave anybody with the goat and the baby? " he asked. " After all the trouble we went to to get that goat, you ought to leave Torres and Greenberg here to take care of things."

" Why Torres? " I asked him.

It was Jamieson who answered me. " Because Torres won't do any good anyway."

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" What's the matter with him? " I asked.

" His rifle's not working," Jamieson said.

" Why not? "

" Because we took the spring out of it. It was the only .30 in the platoon."

" What did you do with the spring? " I asked.

" We had to have a safety-pin for the baby's pants," Giovanni told me. " I thought it wouldn't matter. Torres hasn't shot a Jap yet in the whole war."

" I just hope I never see another baby again as long as I live," I told them.

" Well," Mogoluski asked me, " can Torres stay here, or can't he? "

" No," I told him. " He can still throw grenades."

" What about Greenberg? " Mogoluski asked. " He can't throw any grenades."

" All right," I said. " Greenberg can stay."

Well, these men set Greenberg down with his back up against that wall. Then they put the baby across his lap, and he grabbed hold of both of the goat's front legs with one hand, and he grabbed hold of both the goat's hind legs with the other hand. After that, the rest of us took off.

I couldn't keep track of what happened to Sergeant Blasingame's squad. There was so much wreckage strewn around that they were out of sight in a few minutes. I started by moving from the wall to a bush, then to another wall, then to a hole, and then to a ditch. I told each man to move only when the man ahead of him vacated the last post, or when he was motioned forward. Usually, I had Lopez come up to me before I moved ahead so I could show him where I was going next. By the time I got into the ditch, I had moved about fifty yards from where I started.

It was while I was waiting there for Lopez to come up, that all hell broke loose behind me. First I heard the goat baa-ing. Then I heard the baby start yelling. Last, I heard Greenberg yelling for help. I ran down the ditch a few steps to where I could look back and see. Well, the front part of the goat had got away from Greenberg, and the goat was jumping about, trying to get the back part loose. Every time, after the goat jumped, it would turn round and butt Greenberg, then jump again. Greenberg was holding on for dear life, but the baby was beginning to slide off his lap, so he had to use his free hand to keep her from slipping.

What was happening to Greenberg wasn't half as bad as what was going to happen, though. His yells could be heard all over

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town, and from way off over at the other side I heard Mogoluski answer at the top of his voice that he was coming. It was right at that point that Lopez grabbed my sleeve. I looked and saw four Japs carrying the other machine-gun down the street on the run. They were getting all set to put it down where it would point right at Greenberg. Not only was Greenberg going to get shot, but so was Mogoluski, and all the rest of that thundering herd that was pounding away towards him. I turned around and grabbed the Browning automatic rifle from Lopez, and jumped out of the ditch in plain sight and let go a burst. I didn't get them all. The gunner managed to swing the gun round and like last time, I got hit in the shoulder, the other one. Lopez grabbed my rifle and got the gunner before I got hurt any worse.

Well, that was all there was to it. I got the two machine-guns and Glowski got the mortars when the crews came out to take a shot at Mogoluski and the rest of the men. He gave one blast of his flame-thrower. What Japs he didn't get were done away with when the flame-thrower touched off the ammo dump. It blew Glowski up in the air, but it didn't hurt him.

I felt pretty weak by the time all this was over, so I sat down at the wall and gave Sergeant Blasingame the job of cleaning up what snipers were left in town. After a while, Captain Jonas and Fox Company came into the town, and the Captain came over and told me I could take the platoon and go back to George Company. It was just after the Captain had finished talking to me that Greenberg went walking by.

"Hey, Hoppy," he told me, "you're wounded."

"Well," I told him, "you're the first aid man. Do something."

"I can put some sulfa powder on it," he told me, "but I can't put any bandages on."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because we've used all the bandages."

"Somebody else get wounded?" I asked.

"No," he told me. "We used the bandages to strain the milk for the baby."

We went back to George Company by way of the battalion aid station. A doctor came out of the tent and Jamieson handed the baby over to him. The doctor asked where we got it, so we told him. We also told him how long we'd had it. He asked what we fed it. "Morphine and milk," Mogoluski told him.

The doctor looked at the baby again and listened to her heart and stuff, then he shook his head.

"God sure takes care of them, I guess," he said.

God and George Company, if you ask me.

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I Say, Old Man . . .

do you think we're all that funny?

An American satirist takes a light-hearted look at the British. It was meant to be a guide for Americans in Britain on how to cope with the blessings and foibles of the natives. But there's a point and a laugh for the British, too.

You will find that the British are the most polite people you have ever met. They will be polite to you even if they don't like you. In fact, they will be *especially* polite if they don't like you. They have learned to use politeness as a weapon. Politeness can be fired off either at long or short range. Note the long-ranged, or I-don't-believe-we've-ectually-*met* variety:

> " I *dew* hope you'll *pardon* me ! You *dew* know this is a queue, don't you? Thenk you very *much* ! "

This will take little practice. The short-range, or hand-to-hand weapon is more difficult to master, but can be effective:

> " *Thank you so much for letting me see your* lovely *garden, Mr. Brach ! It's so, ah,* woodsy, *and* untamed ! " (Translation: " The place is an absolute jungle. I can count four dead roses that haven't been clipped, and isn't that a weed, in plain sight? ")

How to be rude to your friends

Here, where politeness is spread so thickly, rudeness has become a badge of intimacy. Once your acquaintances start being rude to you, you'll know you've been accepted as a friend:

> " *Buckley, you'd better sack that bloody gardener. Does he think that weed is a lupin?*"

(He is your friend. He is subtly congratulating you on having a " gardener " instead of an itinerant Italian who comes on alternate Wednesdays, and he thinks you've got a fair show, for a Yank.)

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Hail to British tweeds!

You will be aware that the British do not dress as Americans do, but the exact differences may elude you for some time.

During your first weeks in London you will go wild buying tweed suits and coats galore, of a quality that delights you, and at prices that seem ridiculous. Your wife may do the same thing, and you will both feel that your clothing problems are solved.

This will not be quite the case.

For your first important meeting in London you will dress carefully in your newest and most beautiful tweed suit, with knees lined in silk, a gay and expensive Tattersall check shirt, and your finest hand-made Scotch-grain brogues. You will wish the fellows in the office back home could see you, all turned out like a proper English gentleman.

You may, indeed, be so pleased with the impression you are creating that you will fail to note that every other man is wearing a stiff-collared white shirt, a smooth black worsted suit, and plain black laced Oxfords with straight tips.

If any American is present, he may take you aside later:

" Uh, Buck, that sure is a beautiful tweed suit! "

" Glad you like it, Bill."

" I explained to the chaps that you were just going shooting, and—"

" Me, Bill? No! "

" Uh, they've got a kinda funny thing about tweeds here, in town, I mean. Any old suit, as long as it's black, Buckley."

After this you will not wear tweeds in London again.

You will find a brisk social life clicking away in the country houses all around you. You will be invited often to " come over for a drink " by your kind English neighbours, the first time, perhaps, at an hour that may seem unusual to you, at about noon on Sunday. This is a favourite time for cocktail parties.

---

by Shepherd Mead **This American is a past master at giving tongue-in-cheek advice on anything from sex to braving the elements. After his uproarious success with his book, " How To Succeed in Business Without Really Trying," he decided to visit England. Now, six years and a couple of books later, he and his family have grown to love our way of life—which we think gives him the right to poke gentle fun at us and our tribal customs.**

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" You think I'm over-dressing a bit, Peg? It's only across the field and through the trees. Maybe just the wool sports shirt will be enough."

" Really? I thought I'd wear a cocktail dress and a fur coat."

" I'll go all-out, then. Shirt, tie, the good flannel slacks, polished moccasins, and the number one tweed jacket. Nothing like tweeds in the country, Peg! "

You will be met at the door by your hostess, who may turn and call to her husband:

" Oh, Geoffrey, the gardener is here to be paid off—"

You will discover that all the men there, who also came across the field, or through the trees (some by Jaguar or Mini-Minor) are dressed in stiff-collared white shirts, smooth black worsted suits, and plain black laced Oxfords with straight tips.

No one will express displeasure at the odd way you are dressed. You will, in fact, be praised:

" I say, Brash, you do look comfortable! "

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Your wife, who has come in a full-length coat, has taken it off, and is left in a silk dress. She will be turning a light blue. The temperature in the living room, called lounge, will be an invigorating 54, with a light breeze blowing. All the other women will be wearing heavy woollen dresses, and many of them fur stoles. Stoles, in England, are for indoors:

" My, you Americans are certainly warm-blooded. I'd be simply frozen in a summer dress like that."

What are the upper classes?

Do not fear being poor in England.

In America the upper classes are the people who have the money.

In England the upper classes are the people whose ancestors made money long ago—long enough so that everyone has forgotten how. It doesn't even matter very much whether they have it any more. Some of the Best People are as poor as they can be.

No one will mind if you have to be poor along with them.

You, too, can live the aristocratic life without spending any money. You will just have to learn a few simple, but lordly skills.

Be a sportsman

All the Best People in England are sportsmen. The sooner you can join them, the better.

Start with cricket. Once you have got cricket licked, the rest will be easy.

You do not need to know how to play it, in person. A talking knowledge will be enough.

Go with your son to a cricket game. Any game, even one played by little boys, will be fine for a start. Throw yourself into it:

" Foul ball! "
" Shhhh, Father! "
" I was only whispering, Pete."
" This is cricket, *Father! "*

The first thing to remember is that cricket is QUIET. Unlike a baseball game, which can deafen you half a mile away, a cricket game cannot be heard at all, *even when you are there.*

Once a scandal was caused when the wives of some players were having a *conversation*, inside the clubhouse, during a match. The noise naturally " put everyone off."

A complete game (called " match ") can take *five full* days, from morning until evening, with breaks for lunch and tea.

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The crowd maintains keen interest during the entire period. True, it will seem to you at first that no one is paying attention, or even looking at the game. People will be reading newspapers, playing cards, eating, whispering among themselves about something else, and apparently sleeping—but if you spend several days with them, you will learn to share the tension and excitement.

Do not make the common American mistake of suggesting ways to " speed up the game." Try a different wicket:

> " *Did you like it, Buckley?*"
>
> " *Fascinating, Nige. Did seem to me that things were a bit* rushed, *though. Do you feel that five days are enough for a full game?*"

It is not sure that all British women hate cricket. Many merely dislike it. You will find some who can discuss it without emotion or rancour. However, if your dinner-table companion is female, try to talk of something else.

Football

First let us define our terms. The game most resembling American football is rugby. The one called " football " is soccer.

Rugby, played at most of the fashionable public schools, was originally a game of the upper classes. Lower class critics claim, in fact, that it is being dropped continually on their heads for generations that gives the upper classes some of their special qualities.

If you had any qualms about American football, rugby will terrify you. It is American football without the armour, and almost without the whistle stops. No whistle blows when a knee touches the ground in rugby. Players can be dragged and beaten over the whole field, and the game goes on. They tackle, pile up, and crash into each other at high speed dressed only in a jersey, shorts, and cleated boots. The timid wear a band of cloth around their heads to keep their ears from being torn off. They do not care if anything else is torn off.

Are the British hot or cold?

When the Romans left, and took the central heating with them, life was not possible again in Britain until the invention of the sweater.

Everyone wears a sweater, all the time. You may not see it, but it is there.

Everywhere you look, women are knitting. In America, the lower-priced women's magazines are devoted largely to cooking,

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home-making, and sex-in-marriage. In England they are full of instructions for knitting sweaters. No one knows why this is true, because there is a huge chain of stores devoted almost entirely to the sale of sweaters, at prices that seem lower than the cost of the wool. One theory is that the English feel guilty about sitting down, unless they are doing several things at once.

Almost anything a British housewife can do in a sitting or reclining position she can do and knit at the same time. She can do it and watch television, play bingo, or mind the baby. Marriage counsellors, indeed, allege that the versatility of young knitting wives knows almost no bounds. Few figures are available on this, and independently conducted experiments are often fruitless:

> *" Buckley, all I can say is—it must take a lot of practice. Now, turn out the light, will you, love? "*

Sex and the British

Up until a year or two ago, it was assumed that the British, who are cold to the touch, were sexually frigid. Then, with the sudden blossoming of world-wide interest in the sex-lives of the British upper classes, everyone began asking: is this just the class system at work again? Does this apply only to the hot-blooded aristocrats—or to everybody?

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Let us look about us. Stand almost anywhere in Britain and you will see, on all sides, extraordinary numbers of attractive people. There is something for everyone!

Are the women really on fire?

You will find, as an American male, that the women are not merely lonely, on occasion, and unbearably attractive—but also, in winter, will seem to be literally on fire. The skin area most visible, the legs, will be bright red, so bright that it will shine clearly through their nylons.

You, as an alien, will assume they are red all over, and therefore burning with uncontrollable flames. A few of our countrymen, mastering their native shyness, as well as overcoming the traditional British reserve, have discovered that the curious legular blush does often go above the knees, but usually not *far* above them.

The phenomenon is wholly the result of the British practice of people-barbecue, sitting with the legs in a medium-broil position in front of an electric " fire," or heater, or close to a gas or coal fire.

This maintains body heat without raising room temperature, and gives the legs a red colour which disappears entirely in summer, with no resulting loss in sexual desire.

Do English schools create sex madness?

Some believe that the school system is responsible for the fact that the English are sexually disturbed.

Almost all education in England is mono-sexual, with boys and girls strictly segregated. Even Oxford and Cambridge students are not considered mature enough to stand the proximity of the opposite sex.

Women at both universities are walled and barred apart in separate colleges, like nunneries, where no ill can befall them, whether they want it to or not.

From earliest childhood the sexes meet only in abrupt and well chaperoned clashes at holiday time.

Naturally, with this celibate background, the British male is as startled and over-excited by females as the Victorians were by ankles, when they were hidden from public view.

On being confronted by women, socially, he tends to babble in a pretty excess of gallantry to cover his retreat to the safety of his fellows. He will then stand with them in a closely-knit conversational group, discussing cricket. He knows no woman dares follow him this far.

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Clubs are for hiding

In Moslem countries women are kept behind walls, where only one man can get at them.

In England men keep themselves behind walls where no woman can get at them. The walls are called Clubs, and the British male knows that once inside he is safe. No woman can enter.

It is regarded by many as part of the sinister American influence that a few clubs have allowed women to enter certain rooms, at limited times. This breach in the wall is not expected to become much wider.

Sunday is for sin

In many civilised countries, Sunday morning is reserved for those who wish to go to church, and Sunday afternoons for healthful outdoor activity. This is not the case in Britain. In Britain, Sunday is for sin.

The clean, healthful Sunday pursuits of other countries are not permitted in Britain on Sunday. Football games, tennis tournaments, racing of any kind, in fact, virtually any wholesome public gathering in the open air is forbidden, by unwritten law.

Sunday in Britain is devoted to gardening, and to quiet, dedicated sin.

There isn't anything else to do.

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They ambled along but no door opened

Clip-Clop

by Mary Sayer

THE slow clip-clop of a horse's hoofs in the road brought the women to their front doors, which had been left ajar. As the wheels of Alf Cook's greengrocer's cart ground to a stop, they came out. Going over to the covered cart, they peered into the baskets fixed on either side.

They discussed the stock volubly, though not with malice. Alf Cook was a decent chap who let them have their greengrocery on tick till pay day if they were hard up.

He was reliable, too, calling regularly twice a week at the same time. As Mrs. Page said, it gave the women a chance to meet round his cart and natter.

Amid friendly jeers of "watch his scales," and "serve them from the front," Alf Cook with a rolled cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth remained imperturbable.

He was unmarried and lived with his little crippled white-haired mother in a tiny shop that carried practically no stock. The stock went out with Alf on the cart.

Adjoining the shop was a small, dark stable for his horse. It was rumoured that Alf Cook bedded down with his old hoss—he thought more of his horse than of his own comfort.

His horse had been with Alf on the greengrocery round for many years and he knew every step of the way. When he felt he had stood long enough in one place, he was apt to start off and plod along towards his next stop, perhaps with Alf still weighing up at the back of the cart. Only a sharp slap on his rump and cries of "Whoa," halted him.

One afternoon a man called at the little greengrocer's shop. He was from a local estate agent. Leaning over the old, thick wooden counter, he spoke to Alf.

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" I've got a buyer for your shop. He's prepared to pay good money for it. Young chap with a van—wants to modernise."

The shop belonged to Alf. It had been his father's before him. The dark green paint both outside and in had not been changed since that time, over ten years ago. Nor had the brown paint in the two small rooms upstairs and the one at the back of the shop.

But as his mother said, greengrocery was the only trade Alf knew. If he sold the shop, they'd have to use the money to get somewhere else to live.

Besides . . . there was the horse.

So Alf turned down the offer and refused to consider selling.

Shortly afterwards, a young man with a blue van advertising cut-price greengrocery started up in the same district that Alf covered.

He let it be known that on Saturday, the first day of his round, to anyone spending over five shillings he would give a pound of apples, free.

To a woman, the roads turned out for the apples. The word *free* tempted them.

The young man in tight blue jeans was deft, spoke easily to his customers and served them fast. He leapt with agility on to the van for his reserve stock.

" Make up your mind, Ma," he said to Mrs. Page. She stood deciding whether to accept the pound of bananas she had wanted for twopence under or twopence over the weight.

Mrs. Page was a short, thick-set woman awaiting her new teeth. She disliked being hustled where her pocket was concerned.

She had been out of her house by half past four that morning as usual, in time to catch the early bus. She worked as an office cleaner in a large firm near St. Paul's and she reckoned she was entitled to shop comfortably, taking her time over it. It was one of her perks.

Grudgingly she paid over the extra coppers. The bananas were thrust into her shopping bag, the free apples tipped in on top of them and the van drove off quickly.

" Hm, Worcesters," snorted Mrs. Page, " cheap enough to buy, anyway."

The hovering women dispersed. They could not remain gossiping in the roadway without a van or cart to stand round. Mrs. Page felt aggrieved, as if she had been deprived of something precious. She called to a woman opening her narrow, iron front gate.

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" 'Ow's your Lil? "

" Nothing's 'appened yet. Her husband'll let me know as soon as it does. See you Wednesday," she added, clanging the front gate behind her.

" His potatoes are cheaper," called Mrs. Page.

When Alf Cook's horse ambled along later that morning with his master sitting up in front of the cart, no door was open. No one came out for greengrocery. The blue van had taken the custom. The old horse was bewildered at not being pulled up at his usual halts and kept on stopping.

Alf had heard about the young man with the van and he suddenly began to feel worried. He could see his living disappearing.

When he reached Mrs. Page's house, he noticed a bunch of dahlias in vivid shades of red, hitched by a string to the iron railings.

He stopped his horse and got down from the cart to take them. He knew they were for him.

Whenever possible, Mr. Page gathered a bunch of flowers from his garden to let Alf have on a Saturday for his mother. He said he owed it to him. Usually Mrs. Page handed them over.

Behind each house in the road was a little backyard. Mr. Page, who was a bit of a gardener, had turned his backyard into a garden with the help of the stable manure he obtained from Alf Cook. When he needed it, Mr. Page went over on his bike to the greengrocer's shop to see Alf about it. He went early on a Sunday morning, a zinc pail dangling from one hand. They discussed the local football team and its place in the League before he came away.

The resultant blooms were exhibited to the public in a wide vase standing on a table at the front room window in the Page's house. It was one glowing mass of colour.

As Alf Cook took up the reins, he admired the flowers. He felt a sort of proprietary interest in them. Gloomily he wondered how soon he would be deprived of that pleasure.

However, the following Wednesday the women came out to chi-ike him as usual. They stood gossiping at his cart as they waited their turn to be served.

Alf noticed with mild surprise that none of them were buying his potatoes.

A week or so later, he was outside his little shop unloading, making hard work of pulling a sack of potatoes down from the

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cart, when a blue van drew up beside him. A young man got out.

"'Ere," he said, "let me."

He heaved the sack of potatoes as if it was a sack of chaff and carried it lightly into the shop.

Alf watched him thoughtfully. Once he had been able to do that.

Going back to his van, the young man said, "I was after your shop."

"Yes," said Alf.

"I don't know how you make a living. There's no money about here. They only eat potatoes. I'm turning it in. 'Ere, have one."

Alf accepted a cigarette.

"Me,' I want to get on. I got ideas." The young man strolled up to the horse and patted his side. The old horse stood there enjoying it.

"Don't often see these now," said the young man, changing the subject.

Alf eyed him. "I was thinking of taking a partner," he said cautiously. "Someone with a van to help out along with the horse."

There was a silence.

"How about blue?" said the young man nonchalantly.

Alf Cook nodded.

The young man gave a final slap to the horse. "I'll be up tonight to talk."

He swung himself in to his van.

"See you," he called, as he started up the engine.

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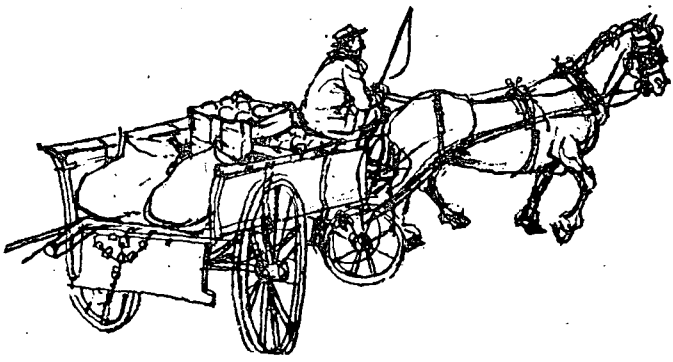

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The lips moved in silent mimicry . . .

ROBERT

by Stanley Ellin

THE windows of the Sixth Grade classroom were wide open to the June afternoon, and through them came all the sounds of the departing school: the thunder of bus engines warming up, the hiss of gravel under running feet, the voices raised in cynical fervour: "*So we sing all hail to thee, District Schoo-wull Number Three . . .*"

Miss Gildea flinched a little at the last high, shrill note, and pressed her fingers to her aching forehead. She was tired, more tired than she could ever recall being in her thirty-eight years of teaching and, as she told herself, she had reason to be. It had not been a good term, not good at all, what with the size of the class, and the Principal's insistence on new methods, and then her mother's shocking death coming right in the middle of everything.

Perhaps she had been too close to her mother, Miss Gildea thought; perhaps she had been wrong, never taking into account that some day the old lady would have to pass on and leave her alone in the world. Well, thinking about it all the time didn't make it any easier. She should try to forget.

And, of course, to add to her troubles, there had been during the past few weeks this maddening business of Robert. He had been a perfectly nice boy, and then, out of a clear sky, had become impossible. Not bothersome or noisy really, but sunk into an endless daydream from which Miss Gildea had to jar him sharply a dozen times a day.

She turned her attention to Robert who sat alone in the room at the desk immediately before hers, a thin boy with neatly-combed, colourless hair bracketed between large ears; mild blue eyes in a pale face fixed solemnly on hers.

"Robert."

"Yes, Miss Gildea?"

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" Do you know why I told you to remain after school, Robert? "

He frowned thoughtfully at this, as if it were some lesson he was being called on for, but had failed to memorise properly.

" I suppose for being bad," he said, at last.

Miss Gildea sighed.

" No, Robert, that's not it at all. I know a bad boy when I see one, Robert, and you aren't one like that. But I do know there's something troubling you, something on your mind, and I think I can help you."

" There's nothing bothering me, Miss Gildea. Honest, there isn't."

Miss Gildea found the silver pencil thrust into her hair and tapped it in a nervous rhythm on her desk.

" Oh, come, Robert. During the last month every time I looked at you your mind was a million miles away. Now, what is it? Just making plans for the vacation, or, perhaps, some trouble with the boys? "

" I'm not having trouble with anybody, Miss Gildea."

" You don't seem to understand, Robert, that I'm not trying to punish you for anything. Your homework is good. You've managed to keep up with the class, but I do think your inattentiveness should be explained. What, for example, were you thinking this afternoon when I spoke to you directly for five minutes, and you didn't hear a word I said? "

" Nothing, Miss Gildea."

She brought the pencil down sharply on the desk. " There must have been *something*, Robert. Now, I insist that you think back, and try to explain yourself."

Looking at his impassive face she knew that somehow she herself had been put on the defensive, that if any means of graceful retreat were offered now she would gladly take it. Thirty-eight years, she thought grimly, and I'm still trying to play mother-hen to ducklings. Not that there wasn't a bright side to the picture. Thirty-eight years passed, meant only two more to go before retirement, the half-salary pension, the chance to potter around the house, tend the garden properly. The pension wouldn't buy you furs and diamonds, sure enough, but it could buy the right to enjoy your own home for the rest of your days instead of a dismal room in the County Home for Old Ladies. Miss Gildea had visited the County Home once, on an instructional visit, and preferred not to think about it.

" Well, Robert," she said wearily, " have you remembered what you were thinking? "

" Yes, Miss Gildea."

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" What was it? "

" I'd rather not tell, Miss Gildea."

" I insist! "

" Well," Robert said gently, " I was thinking I wished you were dead, Miss Gildea. I was thinking I wished I could kill you."

Her first reaction was simply blank incomprehension. She had been standing not ten feet away when that car had skidded up on the sidewalk and crushed her mother's life from her, and Miss Gildea had neither screamed nor fainted. She had stood there dumbly, because of the very unreality of the thing. Just the way she stood in court where they explained that the man got a year in jail, but didn't have a dime to pay for the tragedy he had brought about. And now the orderly ranks of desks before her, the expanse of blackboard around her, and Robert's face in the midst of it all were no more real. She found herself rising from her chair, walking towards Robert, who shrank back, his eyes wide and panicky, his elbow half lifted as if to ward off a blow.

" Do you understand what you've just said? " Miss Gildea demanded hoarsely.

" No, Miss Gildea! Honest, I didn't mean anything."

She shook her head unbelievingly. " Whatever made you say it? Whatever in the world could make a boy say a thing like that, such a wicked, terrible thing! "

" You wanted to know! You kept asking me! "

The sight of that protective elbow raised against her cut as deep as the incredible words had.

" Put that arm down ! " Miss Gildea said shrilly, and then struggled to get her voice under control. " In all my years I've never struck a child, and I don't intend to start now! "

Robert dropped his arm and clasped his hands together on his desk, and Miss Gildea, looking at the pinched white knuckles, realised with surprise that her own hands were shaking uncontrollably. " But if you think this little matter ends here, young-feller-me-lad," she said, " you've got another thought coming. You get your things together and we're marching right up to Mr. Harkness. He'll be very much interested in all this."

Mr. Harkness was the Principal. He had arrived only the term before, and but for his taste in eyeglasses—the large, black-rimmed kind which, Miss Gildea privately thought, looked actorish—and his predilection for the phrase " modern pedagogical methods " was, in her opinion, a rather engaging young man.

He looked at Robert's frightened face and then at Miss Gildea's pursed lips. " Well," he said pleasantly, " what seems to be the trouble here? "

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" That," said Miss Gildea, " is something I think Robert should tell you about."

She placed a hand on Robert's shoulder, but he pulled away and backed slowly towards Mr. Harkness, his breath coming in loud, shuddering sobs, his eyes riveted on Miss Gildea as if she were the only thing in the room beside himself. Mr. Harkness put an arm around Robert and frowned at Miss Gildea.

" Now, what's behind all this, Miss Gildea? The boy seems frightened to death."

Miss Gildea found herself sick of it all, anxious to get out of the room away from Robert. " That's enough, Robert," she commanded. " Just tell Mr. Harkness exactly what happened."

" I said the boy was frightened to death, Miss Gildea," Mr. Harkness said brusquely. " We'll talk about it as soon as he understands we're his friends. Won't we, Robert? "

Robert shook his head vehemently. " I didn't do anything bad! Miss Gildea said I didn't do anything bad! "

" Well, then ! " said Mr. Harkness triumphantly. " There's nothing to be afraid of, is there? "

Robert shook his head again. " She said I had to stay in after school."

Mr. Harkness glanced sharply at Miss Gildea. " I suppose he missed the morning bus, is that it? And after I said in a directive that the staff was to make allowances—"

" Robert doesn't use a bus," Miss Gildea protested. " Perhaps I'd better explain all this, Mr. Harkness. You see—"

" I think Robert's doing very well," Mr. Harkness said, and tightened his arm around Robert, who nodded shakily.

" She kept me in," he said, " and then when we were alone she came up close to me and she said, ' I know what you're thinking. You're thinking you'd like to see me dead ! You're thinking you'd like to kill me, aren't you? ' "

Robert's voice had dropped to an eerie whisper that bound Miss Gildea like a spell. It was broken only when she saw the expression on Mr. Harkness' face.

" Why, that's a lie ! " she cried. " That's the most dreadful lie I ever heard any boy dare—"

Mr. Harkness cut in abruptly, " Miss Gildea ! I *insist* you let the boy finish what he has to say."

Miss Gildea's voice fluttered. " It seems to me, Mr. Harkness, that he has been allowed to say quite enough already! "

" Has he? " Mr. Harkness asked.

" Robert has been inattentive lately, especially so this afternoon. After class I asked him what he had been thinking about,

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and he dared to say he was thinking how he wished I were dead! How he wanted to kill me! "

" Robert said that? "

" In almost those exact words. And I can tell you, Mr. Harkness, that I was shocked, terribly shocked, especially since Robert always seemed such a nice boy."

" His record—? "

" His record is quite good. It's just—"

" And his social conduct? " asked Mr. Harkness in the same level voice.

" As far as I know, he gets along with the other children well enough."

" But for some reason," persisted Mr. Harkness, " you found him annoying you."

Robert raised his voice. " I didn't ! Miss Gildea said I didn't do anything bad. And I always liked her. I like her better than *any* teacher! "

Miss Gildea fumbled blindly in her hair for the silver pencil, and failed to find it. She looked around the floor distractedly.

" Yes? " said Mr. Harkness.

" My pencil," said Miss Gildea on the verge of tears, " it's gone."

" Surely, Miss Gildea," said Mr. Harkness in a tone of mild exasperation, " this is not quite the moment—"

" It was very valuable," Miss Gildea tried to explain hopelessly. " It was my mother's." In the face of Mr. Harkness' stony surveillance she knew she must look a complete mess. Hem crooked, nose red, hair all dishevelled. " I'm all upset, Mr. Harkness. It's been a long term and now all this right at the end of it. I don't know what to say."

Mr. Harkness' face fell into sympathetic lines.

" That's quite all right, Miss Gildea. I know how you feel. Now, if you want to leave, I think Robert and I should have a long, friendly talk."

" If you don't mind—"

" No, no," Mr. Harkness said heartily. " As a matter of fact, I think that would be the best thing all round."

After he had seen her out he closed the door abruptly behind her, and Miss Gildea walked heavily up the stairway and down the corridor to the Sixth Grade room. The silver pencil was there on the floor by Robert's desk, and she picked it up and carefully polished it with her handkerchief. Then she sat down at her desk with the handkerchief to her nose and wept soundlessly for ten minutes.

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That night, when the bitter taste of humiliation had grown faint enough to permit it, Miss Gildea reviewed the episode with all the honesty at her command. Honesty with oneself had always been a major point in her credo, had, in fact, been passed on through succeeding classes during the required lesson on The Duties of an American Citizen, when Miss Gildea, to sum up the lesson, would recite: "*This above all: to thine own self be true . . .*" while thumping her fist on her desk as an accompaniment to each syllable.

Hamlet, of course, was not in the syllabus of the Sixth Grade, whose reactions over the years never deviated from a mixed bewilderment and indifference. But Miss Gildea, after some prodding of the better minds into a discussion of the lines, would rest content with the knowledge that she had sown good seed on what, she prayed, was fertile ground.

Reviewing the case of Robert now, with her emotions under control, she came to the unhappy conclusion that it was she who had committed the injustice. The child had been ordered to stay after school, something that to him could mean only a punishment. He had been ordered to disclose some shadowy, childlike thoughts that had drifted through his mind hours before, and, unable to do so, either had to make up something, or blurt out the immediate thought in his immature mind.

It was hardly unusual, reflected Miss Gildea sadly, for a child badgered by a teacher to think what Robert had; she could well remember her own feelings towards a certain pompadoured harridan who still haunted her dreams. And the only conclusion to be drawn, unpleasant though it was, was that Robert, and not she, had truly put into practice those beautiful words from Shakespeare.

It was this, as well as the sight of his pale, accusing face before her while she led the class through the morning session next day, which prompted her to put Robert in charge of refilling the water pitcher during recess. The duties of the water pitcher monitor were to leave the playground a little before the rest of the class and clean and refill the pitcher on her desk, but since the task was regarded as an honour by the class, her gesture, Miss Gildea felt with some self-approval, carried exactly the right note of conciliation.

She was erasing the blackboard at the front of the room near the end of the recess when she heard Robert approaching her desk, but much as she wanted to she could not summon up courage enough to turn and face him. As if, she thought, he were

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the teacher, and I were afraid of him. And she could feel her cheeks grow warm at the thought.

He re-entered the room on the sound of the bell that marked the end of recess, and this time Miss Gildea plopped the eraser firmly into its place beneath the blackboard and turned to look at him. " Thank you very much, Robert," she said, as he set the pitcher down and neatly capped it with her drinking-glass.

" You're welcome, Miss Gildea," Robert said politely. He drew a handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his hands on it, then smiled gently at Miss Gildea. " I bet you think I put poison or something into that water," he said gravely, " but I wouldn't do anything like that, Miss Gildea. Honest, I wouldn't."

Miss Gildea gasped, then reached out a hand towards Robert's shoulder. She withdrew it hastily when he shrank away with the familiar panicky look in his eyes.

" Why did you say that, Robert? " Miss Gildea demanded in a terrible voice. " That was plain impudence, wasn't it? You thought you were being smart, didn't you? "

At that moment the rest of the class surged noisily into the room, but Miss Gildea froze them into silence with a commanding wave of the hand. Out of the corner of her eye she noted the cluster of shocked and righteous faces allied with her in condemnation; she felt a quick little sense of triumph in her position.

" I was talking to you, Robert," she said. " What do you have to say for yourself? "

Robert took another step backwards and almost tumbled over a schoolbag left carelessly in the aisle. He caught himself, then stood there helplessly, his eyes never leaving Miss Gildea's.

" Well, Robert! "

He shook his head wildly. " I didn't do it! " he cried. " I didn't put anything in your water, Miss Gildea! I told you I didn't! "

Without looking, Miss Gildea knew that the cluster of accusing faces had swung towards her now, felt her triumph turn to a sick bewilderment inside her. It was as if Robert, with his teary eyes and pale, frightened face and too-large ears, had turned into a strange jelly-like creature that could not be pinned down and put in its place. As if he were retreating farther and farther down some dark, twisting path, and leading her on with him. And, she thought desperately, she had to pull herself free before she did something dreadful, something unforgivable.

She couldn't take the boy to Mr. Harkness again. Not only did the memory of that scene in his office the day before make her shudder, but a repeated visit would be an admission that after

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thirty-eight years of teaching she was not up to the mark as a disciplinarian.

But for her sake, if for nothing else, Robert had to be put in his place. With a gesture, Miss Gildea ordered the rest of the class to their seats and turned to Robert, who remained standing.

" Robert," said Miss Gildea, " I want an apology for what has just happened."

" I'm sorry, Miss Gildea," Robert said, and it looked as if his eyes would be brimming with tears in another moment.

Miss Gildea hardened her heart to this. " I apologise, Miss Gildea, and it will not happen again," she prompted.

Miraculously, Robert contained his tears. " I apologise, Miss Gildea, and it will not happen again," he muttered, and dropped limply into his seat.

" Well ! " said Miss Gildea, drawing a deep breath as she looked around at the hushed class. " Perhaps that will be a lesson to us all."

The classroom work did not go well after that, but, as Miss Gildea told herself, there were only a few days left to the end of the term, and after that, praise be, there was the garden, the comfortable front porch of the old house to share with neighbours in the summer evenings, and then, next term, a new set of faces in the classroom, with Robert's not among them.

Later, closing the windows of the room after the class had left, Miss Gildea was brought up short by the sight of a large group gathered on the sidewalk near the parked buses. It was Robert, she saw, surrounded by most of the Sixth Grade, and obviously the centre of interest. He was nodding emphatically when she put her face to the window, and she drew back quickly at the sight, moved by some queer sense of guilt.

Only a child, she assured herself, *he's only a child*, but that thought did not in any way dissolve the anger against him that stuck like a lump in her throat . . .

That was on Thursday. By Tuesday of the next week, the final week of the term, Miss Gildea was acutely conscious of the oppressive atmosphere lying over the classroom. Ordinarily, the awareness of impending vacation acted on the class like a violent agent dropped into some inert liquid. There would be ferment and seething beneath the surface, manifested by uncontrollable giggling and whispering, and this would grow more and more turbulent until all restraint and discipline was swept away in the general upheaval of excitement and good spirits.

That, Miss Gildea thought, was the way it always had been, but it was strangely different now. The Sixth Grade, down to the

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most irrepressible spirits in it, acted as if it had been turned to a set of robots before her startled eyes. Hands tightly clasped on desks, eyes turned towards her with an almost frightening intensity, the class responded to her mildest requests as if they were shouted commands. And when she walked down the aisles between them, one and all seemed to have adopted Robert's manner of shrinking away fearfully at her approach.

Miss Gildea did not like to think of what all this might mean, but valiantly forced herself to do so. Can it mean, she asked herself, that all think as Robert does, are choosing this way of showing it? And, if they knew how cruel it was, would they do it?

Other teachers, Miss Gildea knew, sometimes took problems such as this to the Teachers' Room where they could be studied and answered by those who saw them in an objective light. It might be that the curious state of the Sixth Grade was being duplicated in other classes. Perhaps, she herself was imagining the whole thing, or, frightening thought, looking back as people will when they grow old, on the sort of past that never really did exist. Why, in that case—and Miss Gildea had to laugh at herself with a faint merriment—she would just find herself reminiscing about her thirty-eight years of teaching to some bored young woman who didn't have a fraction of the experience she did.

But underneath the current of these thoughts Miss Gildea knew there was one honest reason for not going to the Teachers' Room this last week of the term. She had received no gifts, not one. The spoils from each grade were heaped high in a series of pyramids against the wall. The boxes of fractured cookies, the clumsily-wrapped jars of preserves, the scarves, the stockings, the handkerchiefs, infinite, endless boxes of handkerchiefs, all were there to mark the triumph of each teacher. And Miss Gildea, who in all her years at District School Number Three had been blushingly proud of the way her pyramid was highest at the end of each term, had not yet received a single gift from the Sixth Grade class.

After the class was dismissed that afternoon, however, the spell was broken. Only a few of her pupils still loitered in the hallway near the door, Miss Gildea noted, but Robert remained in his seat. Then, as she gathered together her belongings Robert approached her with a box outheld in his hand. It was, from its shape, a box of candy, and, as Miss Gildea could tell from the wrapping, expensive candy. Automatically, she reached a hand out, then stopped herself short. He'll never make up to me for what he's done, she told herself furiously; I'll never let him.

" Yes, Robert? " she said coolly.

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" It's a present for you, Miss Gildea," Robert said, and then as Miss Gildea watched in fascination, he began to strip the wrappings from it. He laid the paper neatly on the desk and lifted the cover of the box to display the chocolates within. " My mother said that's the biggest box they had," he said wistfully. " Don't you even want them, Miss Gildea? "

Miss Gildea weakened despite herself. " Did you think I would, after what's happened, Robert? " she asked.

Robert reflected a moment. " Well," he said at last, " if you want me to, I'll eat one right in front of you, Miss Gildea."

Miss Gildea recoiled as if at a faraway warning. *Don't let him say any more*, something inside her cried; *he's only playing a trick, another horrible trick*, and then she was saying, " Why would I want you to do that, Robert? "

" So you'll see they're not poison or anything, Miss Gildea," Robert said. " Then you'll believe it, won't you, Miss Gildea? "

She had been prepared. Even before he said the words, she had felt her body drawing itself tighter and tighter against what she knew was coming. But the sound of the words themselves only served to release her like a spring coiled too tightly.

" You little monster ! " sobbed Miss Gildea and struck wildly at the proffered box which flew almost to the far wall, while chocolates cascaded stickily around the room. " How dare you! " she cried. " How dare you! " and her small bony fists beat at Robert's cowering shoulders and back as he tried to retreat.

He half turned in the aisle, slipped on a piece of chocolate, and went down to his knees, but before he could recover himself Miss Gildea was on him again, her lips drawn back, her fists pummelling him as if they were a pair of tireless mallets. Robert had started to scream at the top of his lungs from the first blow, but it was no more than a remote buzzing in Miss Gildea's ears.

" Miss Gildea! "

That was Mr. Harkness' voice, she knew, and those must be Mr. Harkness' hands which pulled her away so roughly that she had to keep herself from falling by clutching at her desk. She stood there weakly, feeling the wild fluttering of her heart, feeling the sick churning of shame and anguish in her while she tried to bring the room into focus again. There was the knot of small excited faces peering through the open doorway—they must have called Mr. Harkness—and Mr. Harkness himself listening to Robert who talked and wept alternately, and there was a mess everywhere. Of course, thought Miss Gildea dazedly, those must be chocolate stains. Chocolate stains all over my lovely clean room.

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Then Robert was gone, the faces at the door were gone, and the door itself was closed behind them. Only Mr. Harkness remained, and Miss Gildea watched him as he removed his glasses, cleaned them carefully, and then held them up at arm's length and studied them before settling them once more on his nose.

" Well, Miss Gildea," said Mr. Harkness, as if he were speaking to the glasses rather than to her, " this is a serious business."

Miss Gildea nodded.

" I am sick," Mr. Harkness said quietly, " really sick at the thought that somewhere in this school, where I tried to introduce decent pedagogical standards, corporal punishment is still being practised."

" That's not fair at all, Mr. Harkness," Miss Gildea said shakily. " I hit the boy, that's true, and I know I was wrong to do it, but that is the first time in all my life I raised a finger against any child. And if you knew my feelings—"

" Ah," said Mr. Harkness, " that's exactly what I would like to know, Miss Gildea." He nodded to her chair, and she sat down weakly. " Now, just go ahead and explain everything as you saw it."

It was a difficult task, made even more difficult by the fact that Mr. Harkness chose to stand facing the window. Forced to address his back this way, Miss Gildea found that she had the sensation of speaking in a vacuum, but she mustered the facts as well as she could, presented them with strong emotion, and then sank back in the chair quite exhausted.

Mr. Harkness remained silent for a long while, then slowly turned to face Miss Gildea. " I am not a practising psychiatrist," he said at last, " although as an educator I have, of course, taken a considerable interest in that field. But I do not think it needs a practitioner to tell what a clearcut and obvious case I am facing here. Nor," he added sympathetically, " what a tragic one."

" It might simply be," suggested Miss Gildea, " that Robert—"

" I am not speaking about Robert," said Mr. Harkness soberly.

It took an instant for this to penetrate, and then Miss Gildea felt the blood run cold in her.

" Do you think I'm lying about all this? " she cried incredulously. " Can you possibly—"

" I am sure," Mr. Harkness replied soothingly, " that you were describing things exactly as you saw them, Miss Gildea. But have you ever heard the phrase persecution complex? Do you think you could recognise the symptoms of that condition if they were presented objectively? I can, Miss Gildea. I assure you, I can."

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Miss Gildea struggled to speak, but the words seemed to choke her. " No," she managed to say, " you couldn't ! Because some mischievous boy chooses to make trouble—"

" Miss Gildea, no child of eleven, however mischievous, could draw the experiences Robert has described to me out of his imagination. He has discussed these experiences with me at length; now I have heard your side of the case. And the conclusions to be drawn, I must say, are practically forced on me."

The room started to slip out of focus again, and Miss Gildea frantically tried to hold it steady.

" But that just means you're taking his word against mine ! " she said fiercely.

" Unfortunately, Miss Gildea, not his word alone. Last week-end a delegation of parents met the School Board and made it quite plain that they were worried because of what their children told them of your recent actions. A dozen children in your class described graphically at that meeting how you had accused them of trying to poison your drinking water, and how you had threatened them because of this. And Robert, it may interest you to know, was not even one of them.

" The School Board voted your dismissal then and there, Miss Gildea, but in view of your long years of service it was left to me to override that decision if I wished to on my sole responsibility. After this episode, however, I cannot see that I have any choice. I must do what is best."

" Dismissal? " said Miss Gildea vaguely. " But they can't. I only have two more years to go. They can't do that, Mr. Harkness; all they're trying to do is trick me out of my pension! "

" Believe me," said Mr. Harkness gently, " they're not trying to do anything of the sort, Miss Gildea. Nobody in the world is trying to hurt you. I give you my solemn word that the only thing which has entered into consideration of this case from first to last has been the welfare of the children."

The room swam in sunlight, but under it Miss Gildea's face was grey and lifeless. She reached forward to fill her glass with water, stopped short, and seemed to gather herself together with a sudden brittle determination. " I'll just have to speak to the Board myself," she said in a high breathless voice. " That's the only thing to do, go there and explain the whole thing to them ! "

" That would not help," said Mr. Harkness pityingly. " Believe me, Miss Gildea, it would not."

Miss Gildea left her chair and came to him, her eyes wide and frightened. She laid a trembling hand on his arm and spoke eagerly, quickly, trying to make him understand. " You see," she

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said, " that means I won't get my pension. I must have two more years for that, don't you see? There's the payment on the house, the garden—no, the garden is part of the house, really—but without the pension . . ."

She was pulling furiously at his arm with every phrase as if she could drag him bodily into a comprehension of her words, but he stood unyielding and only shook his head pityingly. " You must control yourself, Miss Gildea," he pleaded. " You're not yourself, and it's impossible—"

" No! " she cried in a strange voice. " No! "

When she pulled away he knew almost simultaneously what she intended to do, but the thought froze him to the spot, and when he moved it was too late. He burst into the corridor through the door she had flung open, and almost threw himself down the stairway to the main hall. The door to the street was just swinging shut and he ran towards it, one hand holding the rim of his glasses, a sharp little pain digging into his side, but before he could reach the door he heard the screech of brakes, the single agonised scream, and the horrified shout of a hundred shrill voices.

He put his hand on the door, but could not find the strength to open it. A few minutes later, a cleaning woman had to sidle around him to get outside and see what all the excitement was about.

Miss Reardon, the substitute, took the Sixth Grade the next day, and, everything considered, handled it very well. The single ripple in the even current of the session came at its very start when Miss Reardon explained her presence by referring to the " sad accident that happened to dear Miss Gildea." The mild hubbub which followed this contained several voices, notably in the back of the room, which protested plaintively, " It was *not* an accident, Miss Reardon; she ran right in front of that bus," but Miss Reardon quickly brought order to the room with a few sharp raps of her ruler, and after that, class work was carried on in a pleasant and orderly fashion.

Robert walked home slowly that afternoon, swinging his schoolbag placidly at his side, savouring the June warmth soaking into him, the fresh green smell in the air, the memory of Miss Reardon's understanding face so often turned towards his in eager and friendly interest. His home was identical with all the others on the block, square white boxes with small lawns before them, and its only distinction was that all its blinds were drawn down. After he had closed the front door very quietly behind him, he set his schoolbag down in the hallway, and went into the

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stuffy half darkness of the living room. Robert's father sat in the big armchair in his bathrobe, the way he always did, and Robert's mother was bent over him holding a glass of water.

" No ! " Robert's father said. " You just want to get rid of me, but I won't let you ! I know what you put into it, and I won't drink it! I'll die before I drink it! "

" Please," Robert's mother said, " please take it. I swear it's only water. I'll drink some myself if you don't believe me." But when she drank a little and then held the glass to his lips, Robert's father only tossed his head from side to side.

Robert stood there watching the scene with fascination, his lips moving in silent mimicry of the familiar words. Then he cleared his throat. " I'm home, Mama," Robert said softly. " Can I have some milk and cookies, please? "

2 new writers make their bow in Argosy next month. One is young, an American, destined for fame. The other is already famous in Europe, but as yet unknown to British readers. Both will make their first appearance in Britain in next month's Argosy.

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Sweet Valentine

Oft have I heard both youths and virgins say
Birds choose their mates, and couple too, this day:
But by their light, I never can devine,
When I shall couple with my Valentine . . .

ROBERT HERRICK

It was an old custom in England to draw lots for lovers on this day, the person being drawn being the drawer's Valentine, and being given a present, sometimes of an expensive kind, but oftener of a pair of gloves, and now frequently represented by a greeting card of a sentimental, humorous, or merely vulgar character. REV. E. COBHAM BREWER,

I hope you will not take amiss,
My being so bold as to send you this.
I chose you from among the rest
The reason was I loved you best
Sure as the grapes grew on the vine
I choose you for my Valentine
The rose is red, the grape is green
The days are past that I have seen—
The roses red, the violet blue,
Carnations are sweet and so are you
If you love me as I love you
No knife shall cut our love in two.

SARAH GRACEY, 1830

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Behind the Scenes

One of those who went in for a good deal of ebullience and fluff was Eugene Rimmel, a celebrated *parfumeur* in the Strand, and apparently a latecomer to the Valentine trade. Most of his materials came from George Meek, the fancy stationer of Fleet Street . . . so he did not exactly construct his Valentines; they were only we learn, " composed, put together and made delicious with fragrance by Mr. Rimmel." But that was an industry in itself. From eighty to a hundred women were constantly at work according to the time of year, and Rimmel hovered around them with a watchful eye, thinking up new ideas for " the unforeseen addition of strange and quaint materials, whimsical surprises and practical jests." He liked the larger, three-dimensional looking-glass lake with a swan ; a sweet-box hidden in a " satin couch " ; a musical box that chimed in a posy of flowers. Rimmel sought his ingredients all over the world: in Genoa, and Budapest, in Peru, Bohemia and Japan. One year he discovered a Brazilian convent where the nuns were making artificial flowers out of the feathers of gorgeous tropical birds. " It is Nature imitating Nature! " he cried.

LAURENCE WHISTLER, *The English Festivals*

Lovers' Knots !

Curl your locks as I do mine
Two before and three behind
So Good Morning, Valentine.
Hurra! Hurra! Hurra!

Nursery Rhyme

Blossom Forth

" Last Friday was Valentine's Day, and the night before, I got five bay-leaves, and pinned four of them to the four corners of my pillow, and the fifth to the middle; and then if I dreamt of my sweetheart, Betty said we should be married before the year was out. But to make it more sure, I boiled an egg hard, and took out the yolk, and filled it with salt; and when I went to bed, ate it, shell and all, without speaking or drinking after it. We also wrote our lovers' names upon bits of paper, rolled them up in clay and put them into water; and the first that rose up was to be our Valentine. Would you think it? Mr. Blossom was my man. I lay a-bed and shut my eyes all the morning, till he came to our house; for I would not have seen another man before him for all the world."

ANON

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The Little Heiress

At first, a mysterious hostility between them had taken root

I'LL fetch some flowers," Rose had said, and took up for the visitor's room a bunch of red and white cabbage roses from the garden. Mrs. Miller, the housekeeper, was preparing his room rather belatedly—all day she had panted and sighed in the heat which, unusually scorching for England, had come with September.

"Your namesake again!" she tittered. "There's plenty of snapdragons and asters left in the borders. You've been giving him roses every weekend for a month or more. He'll be thinking you've gone sweet on him." Folding back a corner of the bed-covers, she darted an unseen glance of compassion at her cherished pet, whose twelfth birthday came in December. During that week something undeclared had embarrassed the complicity which had existed between them for years, and Mrs. Miller was nervously aware that Rose had not only noticed it but, for some reason, withheld comment.

"Kieron," Rose said, lifting a Chinese ginger jar down from the lattice sill, "told me there's nothing like a rose to look at when one wakes in the morning."

"That's his Irish blarney, dear. A jug of whisky by his bed is more his mark." Hastily, Mrs. Miller added, "Though your favourite isn't so bad as the other fellow who used to come here—that I will believe! And I grant you he's got looks."

A contented widow, over-stout but able, Mrs. Miller let out a giggle from deep in her freed bosom. Rose stood smelling a

A quietly intriguing new story . . .

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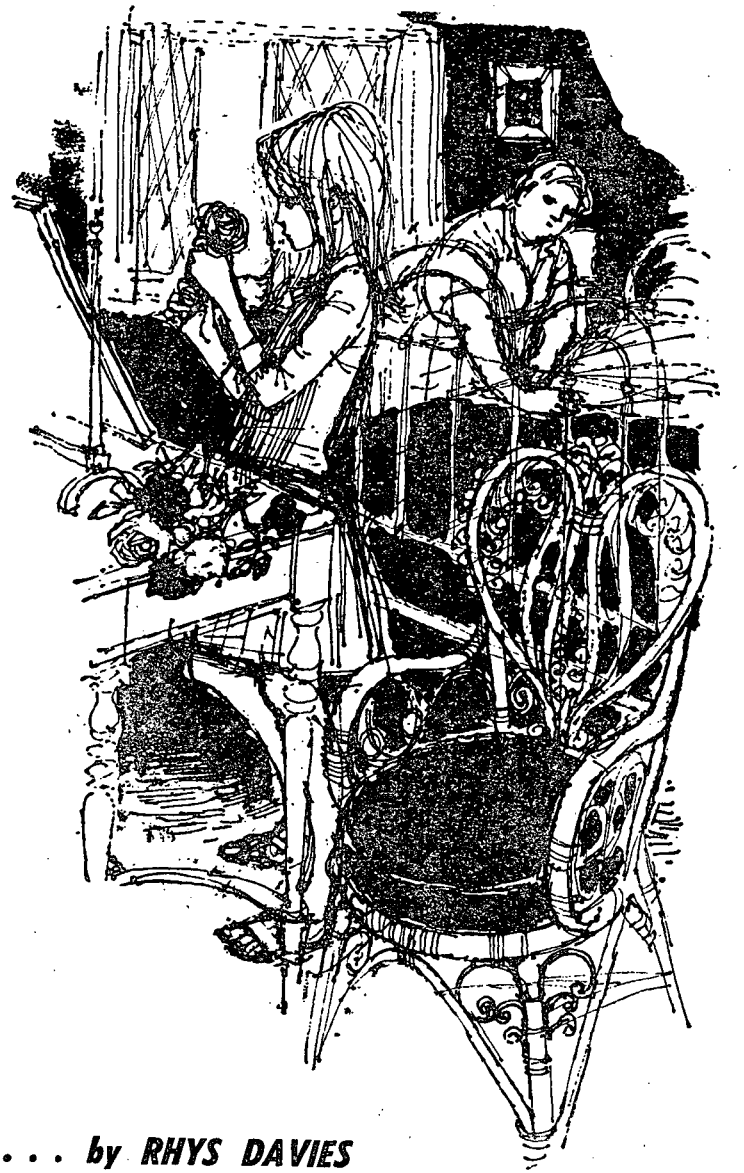

. . . by RHYS DAVIES

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red bloom. She was waiting to be left alone in the room, but Mrs. Miller, giving a token flick of her duster over the dressing-table, went on, "Your auntie won't like to find her last roses picked again without her permission . . . Phew, it's close enough for a terrible thunderstorm! I've taken my corset off," she confided. "Do I look loose?"

"In Kenya," said Rose, who often pretended to remember a great deal of her first six years, "there were days when you'd have taken everything off to do your work. My black nurse only dressed properly on Sundays, to sing hymns."

"Yes, yes, we all know you saw some queer things in that place, my lady." It was Mrs. Miller's proud boast that she had never been even to London, fifty miles away, though she had been once to Oxford, in the other direction, and sat through a Gilbert & Sullivan opera there. "I've still to roast a leg of lamb for your auntie standing in my altogether . . . Aren't you hot in that frock?" she asked, cautiously. "You haven't worn it since the Christmas party at school. It looks tight."

Never really disparaging, and not a liar, Mrs. Miller seldom annoyed Rose. "It's tight," she agreed. "But I like it, and I'm not hot." She carried the jar to the bathroom along the passage.

When she went back, Mrs. Miller had gone downstairs. She selected the firmest rose and pushed it down between the bed sheets. Then she paused from arranging the others in the jar, ran to her aunt's room, and returned with nail scissors; retrieving the bed rose, she carefully nipped five thorns off. This was to be Kieron's last weekend in the house before he and Aunt Cora went for a three weeks' holiday in Italy. Because of this she had changed—even before teatime—into the party dress.

It was still much too early for the sound of the car to come through the beech woods—Rose's aunt left her Cadillac in a Henley garage on Monday mornings and took a train to London, where she worked in her flat until the Friday afternoons, arriving at her house at six-thirty. Rose, returning the scissors, and safe for more than an hour, settled at the dressing-table and examined the contents of an untidily crowded drawer. A necklet of pearls was coated in face-powder, two old moonstone pendants lay under sunglasses, and—oh, there were masses of the costume jewellery Aunt Cora had a mania for. She took out the pearls. Would they be missed? Her tongue licking over her lips, Rose glanced over her shoulder at the open door. It was more an instinctively prudent glance than a guilty one. Most weekends

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over the last few months she had stolen two or three silver coins—half a crown the largest, and not, so far, a note—from the heap of money which disagreeable, mean *and* selfish Aunt Cora tipped out on this dressing-table soon after arriving from London.

In a vague way, she felt entitled to the coins. One dismal afternoon last winter, Mrs. Miller had told her about the fortune that was to be hers some day—"Don't breathe a word," she had burst out, an hour before taking her by bus to a dentist in Henley, "but you're a little heiress. It's the money your dad left, and your auntie and a London solicitor are taking care of it until you're a full-size girl. Oh, you'll be such a madam, with a butler and a chauffeur and everything! So buck up." To Rose's bitter, "Then why is she so skinny with me?" Mrs. Miller had only replied, "Ha!" But this revelation had no link with the theft last weekend, of one of Kieron's silk handkerchiefs and his ballpen. These were just wanted as mementoes because he was going to Italy. And some day he would receive a dozen such handkerchiefs and a pen of gold.

The pearls were dropped back; ready money was what she required for her purpose. She looked into the mirror and gave a grimace. The waxen-pale face she saw daunted her. A scrupulous oval narrowed still more between long hanks of greenishly amber hair. It had affinity with a solitary snowdrop rather than the opulent rose. "I expect I'm anaemic," she murmured, drawing a thin black line along her eyelids, "like Beryl Hynes, who had to eat all that liver extract. But at least I'm clean." Delicate dabs of rouge and a faint smear of lipstick eased her dejection further. She went downstairs to the kitchen with a resolute step.

"I'm giving them salmon tonight," Mrs. Miller said, often courteously soliciting Rose's opinion on domestic matters. "Everything cold, a cold consommé or melon, cold tartlets or icecream—or both. What do you think?" She looked up from her slicing of cucumber, and went on at once, without censure, "No, dear. It's wrong. It makes you look *forty* . . . They'll laugh at you!" she warned.

"I'm so pale, and my face is always the same."

"Pale suits you. And you've got plenty of expression—a regular little witch for it. Go and wash it off, dear, and fetch me some mint. I want to make my mint sauce tonight, for the lamb I'm giving them for lunch tomorrow."

Mrs. Miller shook her head with such pained repudiation that Rose climbed immediately to the poky top-floor bathroom which, with two adjacent attic rooms, she shared with the housekeeper,

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though there were four good bedrooms and a spaciously grand bathroom on the floor below. The make-up removed, she went down to the fenced vegetable patch in the dip lying a distance from the house.

Ernest, an elderly bachelor, was cleaning the model sty on the opposite side of the path. He, too, was a friend. "Maisie's up in the orchard," he grinned, when Rose stopped to scrutinise the six weaners grizzling round an empty and washed trough. "Gone to look for you, I expect. Or after the windfalls—she smells them from down here."

"I'll drive her back," Rose promised. Cleaning the sty was Ernest's last job of the day before he went home to the village, and Maisie, the prize-winning sow, had become her charge.

There still was most of an hour to go. After delivering the mint, she fetched from under her bed-mattress Kieron's pen and the cheap writing-pad Mrs. Miller had lent her that morning, and visited Maisie on her way to the hammock. Gorged with fallen apples, the privileged sow lay fast asleep in the orchard's long grass. Rose gently touched the powdered shoulder, for luck. If woken, Maisie would sob to her like a human being. She had taken to violently shaking off her avaricious young, running to her protector for succour from them; a wonderfully productive mother, she was past her prime now. Ernest had said it was ever since she got a first-award red rosette stuck on her forehead at a Reading show that she developed tantrums and neglected her young. But Rose thought the poor dear had borne far too many. She blamed Aunt Cora, who only bred pigs for a profitable hobby and bragged of the money she made on them.

A blueness had come to the beech woods. From the canopied hammock—it was a new, luxuriously full-length one, snapped up at the July sales in London by Aunt Cora—Rose looked up now and again from her writing as if seeking aid in the calm, wide view of river valley far below. A domed, three-columned white temple on a poplar-fringed hillock across the Thames was a point of concentration for her glassily absorbed eyes. All day, off and on, she had made several versions of a letter, increasing her age by a year in each one. She wanted to get it in the post the next day.

She paused to go over two pages, with more satisfaction now.

Dear Miss Pamela,

I am sixteen and wish for good advice after reading your replies to readers, having no parents and alone in the world. But I have a selfish aunt who only thinks of herself and divorced her husband. I have private means but live in her house and I am worried about a man older

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than me, I think thirty or forty. He comes here with her for weekends. But she used to bring another man here and made him suffer and he drank a lot. Am I to tell this new one about the other man and how wicked and selfish she is? He brings me presents. Am I to tell him about her mean nature? She does not use her imagination and is in business and speaks like a sewing-machine. You said to one reader last week to go out more, but I have plenty of fresh country air and animals. Can I come to see you?

There she had halted, forgetting the lie about her age but vaguely doubtful that Pamela's zeal for her readers' welfare would extend to welcoming a personal call. Besides, not nearly enough money was collected yet for a flight to London and the cost, perhaps for more than one night, of bed and breakfast in a hotel. She crossed out "Can I come to see you?" and wrote:

I want to find where he lives in London and visit him after they come back from Italy. Would this be all right? Time is short and I am desperate. Stamp enclosed. At the end of next week I am going to Scotland for a fortnight, so . . .

The humming in the woods had not been heard; the car was rasping over the nearby gravelled drive when, with a gasp, she scrambled from the hammock. She pushed the writing-pad and pen under one of the four seat-cushions, and bounded to the rear of Ernest's toolshed. From there, twirling a hastily-plucked stalk of Michaelmas daisies, she advanced to greet Kieron composedly enough.

He was coming out of the garage carrying a suitcase. She noticed his hesitation instantly.

"Hullo, Rose," he said, not approaching for his usual ruffling of her hair and a minute's banter.

Aunt Cora appeared, and said curtly, "Aren't you hot in that dress?"

"No." Rose stared at her aunt's heat-darkened face. The tawny crust of make-up looked dusty and cracked. "I haven't been in London."

"Well, your nose is perspiring." After her five stifling days in town, Cora Clee was not yet relaxed; she ran an agency for fashion models in her flat and also worked hard at pummelling into shape girls taken straight from the suburban technical schools. "I'll go up for a bath straight away," she said to Kieron. Metal bracelets crowded her arms. From her trimly-disciplined but medallion-hung bust an expensive scent came unstintingly.

"Me too." Kieron, his sunburnt face held away from Rose,

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tugged off his tie in an irritated way. Without another word to the stock-still girl, he followed his hostess.

Was it only the heat? Or had there been a row? Rose, the letter completely forgotten, dashed after them as they disappeared under the clematis ropes of the front porch. "Come and see Maisie in the orchard before I take her back to the sty, Kieron," she babbled pleadingly. Surely he and Aunt Cora couldn't take a bath together? "I scrubbed out her ears this morning, and powdered her with DDT, and there's not a lice on her."

"Not just now, Rose."

Cora's voice came loudly from the hall. "I've told you before not to allow Maisie into the orchard, Rose. She'll be inside the house next." Rose drew up, staring at Kieron's pastel sandals going into the hall. "I let her have a donkey for a pet—*why* has she to take to a pig instead?"

"You like them very much yourself," Kieron said.

Rose burst into the hall. "It's *because* Maisie is a pig! I didn't want the donkey. He just stood for hours looking at nothing." Aunt Cora still treated her as if she was about six. And in any case the unresponsive donkey had been taken in out of charity, when some neighbours moved away.

"Rose," her aunt said, suddenly amiable, "will you get the drinks ready for us, please? On the veranda." She threw her handbag on a chair. From the staircase, she smiled at her wide-eyed niece. Kieron ran a hand through his thick black hair and followed her up with his suitcase. He seemed not to want to remain downstairs for even a moment.

Rose, her damp nose twitching, looked from his vanishing figure to the handbag. Money in it would include payment of Mrs. Miller's and Ernest's wages and small local bills. But why hadn't the bag been taken upstairs as usual? She backed away from it; and in the dining-room, slowly assembling bottles and glasses on to a tray, she paused to stare out now and again at its glossy black. Yet, that friendly smile on the stairs . . .

Cora Clee, not nearly so rich as her niece would be at eighteen, had worked even harder after getting rid of a spendthrift husband. She wanted to earn the means for retirement from her agency so that she could give full rein to her true love—stockbreeding on the lush family acres she had inherited with the house.

But for Rose, it was likely that she would have inherited her brother's astutely invested share of the family money too. He had gone out to Kenya to preserve his remaining lung, married

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a youngish Englishwoman also living there for health reasons, and became a widower some months after the gamble of Rose's birth. Summoned by cable six years later, his sister arrived just in time for his funeral in Limuru. But she was not even mentioned in his will; Rose, whose mother had turned out to be well-off and had no near relations, got the lot.

Furthermore, after undertaking to rear the seemingly healthy child in England, Clee's hard-driving director found that, despite vigorous protests, the prim Nairobi lawyer would allow her only the expenses for her journey back, and not a penny for her arrow-rapid errand of devotion out from England. This comparatively trivial item of loss had ever rankled, as such marginal things are apt to do in the feminine breast. By arrangement with the appointed London trustee of the estate, she was paid a quarterly sum for her niece's upbringing, and this, too, from time to time provoked an acrimonious letter from the industrious aunt who had been trapped not only by a bout of sisterly emotion in Kenya, but an access of self-rebuke for an innate dislike of children.

At first, before a mysterious hostility between them had taken firm root, she had ideas of the heiress acquiring the agency in due course, at a grateful price. Occasionally she brought one or two promising new models to the house for a weekend, especially if they were lower-class Cockneys—knowledge of country houses, pastures, and how to cross a double sty gracefully could be of use for posing in rough tweeds, mackintoshes, sturdy brogues. But Rose was always petrified by these gleaming girls who, under their trainer's hawk-eye, moved carefully in an austere world of sacrifices which seemed to include extreme sparseness both of speech and table appetite. Thin, but a good eater (Mrs. Miller said her nerves burnt it up), she would vanish to the kitchen or down to the sty as often as she could. Lately, too, a self-possessed evasiveness, amounting to disdain, had come into her manner with her aunt, who had kept postponing news of the inheritance. But Cora's dream of an early transfer of the agency had been given up long before this.

Her sudden amiability on the staircase was maintained on the veranda; Rose was invited to sit there with an orangeade. It persisted in the candlelit dining-room until a few minutes after Mrs. Miller had brought in tartlets and—Rose's great favourite—pistachio-strewn icecream. Cora, though wearing her normal emblematic torrent of gold chunks, beads and semi-precious stones, looked cool in a low-cut dress. She hadn't spoken very much during the meal. Kieron, who had drunk

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nearly all the bottle of hock himself, talked a lot about a director of his advertising firm who had had a stroke in the heat of that week. Then he too fell silent. His mellifluous tenor voice had sounded a bit on edge, he did not look cool in his cream linen jacket, and he still had a lectured look.

Cora lit a cigarette. Even the snapping of her lighter was decisive. "Rose," she began, "I had a letter from Mrs. Humphreys this morning. You know she's arriving from Scotland late next week and will take you back with her?"

Rose paused over the unnecessary question, then replied, "Yes. For my fortnight's holiday there."

"There's that, of course. But I've arranged for you to go to a school in Perth, not far from Gwen Humphreys' home. So you won't be returning here until the Christmas holiday."

Rose shot a look at Kieron. But his head was bent low as, absorbedly, he ate a third tartlet. Panic came into her face. She dropped her spoon, and stammered, "Miss . . . but Miss Webber didn't tell me I wasn't going back to her school in October! I've . . . I've left my pencil-box and tin of water colours there—"

"Nobody will steal those," Cora remarked, allowed time for this to sink in, and went on, "Mr. Humphreys will be able to drive you into Perth and collect you every day. So, the same as at Miss Webber's, you needn't be a boarder at this excellent school."

"Perth," said Kieron, in the further silence. "I was stationed near there during the war. Wonderful fishing and scenery."

But Rose had no attention for him now. Time had helped her. Her clear, water-grey eyes stared at her aunt. It was a long, slow, knowledgeable stare; and a challenging derision flicked into it. A hand playing with some of the gaudy agency stock round her throat, Cora flinched as she met the stare. For a moment, the exchange of gaze was like a preposterous foreshadowing of exclusive female warfare, the man at the table cancelled out. Cora quickly rallied; smiling, she offered Rose more icecream. The helpless panic returned to Rose's face.

Her eye-socket twitched. She shook her head, and began stammering again. "Why . . . why have I got to go to a school in Scotland?"

"But, darling, Scotland isn't the other side of the world!" Cora's pruned voice took on the ruthless candour her trainees knew well. "I *had* thought of packing you off to a school in Lausanne, but there hasn't been time to arrange it . . . . *Why*," she rapped, "are you so anxious to stay here?"

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"I . . . I don't want to leave Maisie," Rose blurted, wildly lapsed below her age again.

"Maisie is not going to be with us much longer." Cora lit a second cigarette. "Education in Scotland," she proceeded, for once treating her niece as if she had matured, "is of the highest order. The Scots have the greatest respect for scholastic achievements." Narrowing her eyes, she blew out a whiff of smoke. In a tone which suggested a less complimentary regard, she added. "To say nothing of honesty being to the fore up there. The Scots are famous for that, and perhaps it can be taught."

Rose's chair scraped on the parquet. "I'll take Maisie back to the sty," she said, aloof and guarded.

"How do you do that, Rose?" Kieron smiled at her dazzlingly. "Beat her with a stick?"

Circumspectly, she replied, "No. Maisie does what I tell her. She's got brains . . . though," she added, pausing in the effort to focus her eyes on him, "she's had so many husbands."

"Husbands!" Kieron's shout of laughter had an unwarranted force.

She recovered a little more poise in this exchange. "Ernest calls them that. He says she's a great-great-great-granny and has children all over the earth."

Sedately, she began to walk past Kieron. His hand came out and swept her against the arm of his chair. "Run up to my room and look in my bag," he whispered in her ear. "I forgot to bring your sweets down." Every Friday he brought her an elaborately-packed box from some special London shop and, before, had presented it on arrival.

"I'll get them when I go to bed," she said, stiff in his clasp.

Cora noisily closed a sideboard door with her knee. "We'll have coffee on the veranda, Kieron," she called, a bottle and two glasses in her hands. "Come. The moon is up."

It was a sultry great orb, hanging low over a beech wood. First sight of its swollen girth was startling. As if threatened by the strength of its ochre glowering, Rose backed into the porch for a second.

As she went towards the orchard, it was with the preoccupied steadiness of a sleepwalker. Maisie, perhaps disturbed by the moonrise, though its glare was less in the orchard, had moved; brushing spiders' threads from her face, Rose found her in the deeper shadows under a low-branched pear tree. But she had dropped into fast sleep again. Rhythmical snoring came from the scimitar up-curve of a snout caught in a spill of moonlight

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and turned to gold in it. Rose knelt before the row of flaccid teats.

" Strike her with thunder and lightning, O God! " she prayed aloud. Her touch on Maisie's shoulder brought only a momentary twitch of the snout. Lowering her voice and eyes, as if addressing the underworld powers in turn, she whispered, " I'd like to fry her toadstools for breakfast! Fly Agaric and the Death Cap! " she specified—not so backward in some respects as her aunt judged from school reports—in the glades that morning, having recognised the lurid red and delicate yellow of the fungus, brought to swaggering size by the moist heat. But how would it be possible to entice Mrs. Miller away from the stove? Grown-ups never failed to get you by the tail somehow; and they knew exactly how to twist it. Her voice changed to a helpless whimper. " Let me have my father's money soon, O God, and I'll throw hundreds of pound notes in her face! " She cast herself on Maisie's solid body. Maisie remained asleep and only gave a repudiating grunt, her work in the world done.

There Rose left her for the night. It was all she could think of in retaliation against Aunt Cora just then. Depression reached down to her plodding feet. She forced them out of the folded-back glass doors of the back sitting-room and down the few yards of path to the veranda; she couldn't go upstairs without seeing Kieron. Aunt Cora stopped talking as she approached. " I'm going to bed now," she said, detachedly. " Goodnight."

Aunt Cora did not ask about Maisie. She lay idly on the chaise longue, smoking as usual, and spoke with an inattentiveness that was still more insulting. " Don't read too long in bed. Miss Webber mentioned to me that you bent low over your work. She thinks you need glasses. I'm going to ask Gwen Humphreys to take you to an oculist in Perth. Good night, darling."

" Shall we go for a walk in the woods in the morning, Rose? " Kieron sat on the brick step, pouring himself another drink from the bottle beside him. She did not reply, and he said, " Goodnight, my sweetie." He had removed his jacket, and his shirt was open to the waist. Moonlight made his teeth glitter as he gave her a broad smile and a wink. She turned away.

Shouting women's voices came from Mrs. Miller's television in the kitchen off the hall. She pushed the door and stood holding it open. Mrs. Miller, an eye on the screen, was drying dishes. " Come to see the play for a while? " she asked, in a lull of the voices. " It's not long begun. All about women in

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prison—and a nasty lot of vixens they are, except one! Enough to put you off prison for a bit of peace," she giggled, uncertainly.

"She's sending me to a school in Scotland."

"Ah!" Mrs. Miller's attention fled back to the screen. Plainly at her wits' end, she exclaimed, "Well, my dear, girls in your position must expect to go to such places. But I daresay it's not so bad up there as they say. All that rain and Scotch mist, I mean, dear," she pursued hurriedly. "I mean, the Royal Family is always going there—"

"You knew!" The accusing voice did not falter.

Mrs. Miller became more flurried. "I'd told you enough already—all about your money! I didn't know about this school till last Monday morning, just before she left for London—no, I didn't! And she made me promise not to tell you." The thick neck drew up. "'Oh, madam,' I said, 'it will upset her,' and she turned round to me and said, 'They soon forget.' It's worried me all the week, and the heat as well!" Recovering an amount of grown-up authority, the television ignored, she fixed her eyes intensely on Rose's impassive face. "Something must have made her decide about it last weekend—did you *do* anything then?"

"No." Abruptly, Rose turned to go. She hesitated, and asked, in a resigned way, "You'll write to me every week . . . tell me about Maisie?"

"Every week, dear . . . Stop and see the television," Mrs. Miller coaxed. Rose ran to her, stayed in the fat arms for a minute, then stiffening, walked out.

The hot, carbolic-smelling top bathroom was like a friendly haven she was going to lose for ever. She gazed from her low, green-painted chair to the childish duck of celluloid she had kept over the years, to her violet egg of soap lying beside Mrs. Miller's lard-white block of Windsor in a rusty wire holder. Brooding on Scotland, she remained sunk for a long time on the unexpectedly cool lavatory seat. Strain puckered her face. The shock of the peremptory banishment still locked her faculties; she could find no way of escape, and no way of retaliation. She crossed to the wash bowl with another whimper. "You look unwell," she told her face in the mirror. But her tongue wasn't coated.

Forgetting to fetch Kieron's box of sweets, forgetting the rose in his bed, she closed the door of her small room with depression unabated. She tried to remember exactly how much money there was in the canister buried in a hollow oak. But

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she reminded herself that she hadn't discovered Kieron's London address yet, and there was only a week before he left for Italy. And he had behaved so differently tonight! That wink on the veranda—no, she hadn't liked it; whistling boys on bikes winked like that.

Certain that she wouldn't sleep all night, nevertheless she pulled the electric-light string beside the cheap headboard; reading would be no good. Moonlight, a softer intrusion here, lay across the bed from the open dormer window. And, presently, it both soothed and quickened her mind. She could think more clearly now. *What* had Aunt Cora discovered last weekend? Had Kieron told her of the loss of a handkerchief and his pen? She bounded out of bed. The letter and pen under the hammock cushion! On these summer nights those two often strolled about the garden before going upstairs.

Stopping only to push her feet into felt-soled velvet slippers, she sped down the upper flight of stairs and leaned over the banister. Except for distant television voices, it was silent in the hall. She crept down, darted to the wide-open porch door, and stood peering through the clematis ropes. There was no sign of them in the garden that side of the house; she streaked across the dew-wet lawn, veered to the right through a clump of hazels, and entered the orchard at a point farthest from the hammock.

Spiders' threads were more abundant at that end of the orchard, above a bush-smothered old chalk pit. She broke through the detaining silken meshes, her hands parting the thick air, slowly as a learning swimmer's. Her thumping heart became quieter. Even if they had gone to the hammock to look at the moonlit view of river valley, why should they lift the flat seat cushions? She began to zigzag from tree to tree, peering and listening from behind each trunk. There was no sound of voices; only Maisie's faint snore reached her. But not far from where the fruit trees ended, she dropped into the long wet grass, slithered forward on her stomach, and stopped. She could see, at a slight angle now, the interior of the hammock. They were there.

The huge moon moved lazily towards a swarthy wood crowning a hillock at the valley's far end. A bare arm came out of the hammock, slackly hung downwards, and the open palm of a hand could be seen. When they sat up, Rose dropped her head into the grass. She pressed her face into the earth-smelling roots. But she heard their voices distinctly—"The night will be cooler out here. Shall I fetch a sheet or something?" and,

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" Insects, Kieron darling. Gnats, busy ants and spiders. We'll have a cigarette, then go in." After a moment, there was the click of a lighter. Still lying on her stomach, Rose eased herself away.

She snatched up the box of matches from between the candelabra on the sideboard and, in the hall, listened for an instant to a muffled television voice giving news. She had rounded the house-corner and almost reached the elm-shaded toolshed when, for all the pounding in her ears, she heard them talking. Crouching down behind a water butt, she saw them walking arm-in-arm along the flower-bordered path a few feet away. They were making for the veranda.

She closed the door of the crowded toolshed and lit a match. When she came out she carried the oblong tin can from which Ernest fed his lawn-mower. Panting, she hurried; the house might be closed for the night at any moment. Her mauve night-dress caught against a wild rose-bush and tore. Aunt Cora's scent still lingered in the hammock. But the pen and thin writing-pad were where they had been placed. She removed them and knelt on the cropped grass in agonised efforts to unscrew the stubborn can-stopper. It turned at last. The can was about half full; she poured the petrol over the four seat cushions, scattering the last drops over the heap of gay-coloured cushions on which their heads had lain. She staggered back, almost overcome by the odour. A third lighted match was thrown before a soft blue glow kindled, became brisker, and shot into flame. She ran.

The can was thrown into the toolshed. Outside, writing-pad, pen and box of matches in her hands, she looked back for a second and saw the red glow through the trees. Mrs. Miller's kitchen lattice slammed. She sped. The porch door was still open. But they were talking in the illuminated back sitting-room, and the door into the hall was ajar. The television had been shut off. She sidled along the hall walls, did not go into the dining-room to replace the matches, and safely reached the staircase. Aunt Cora said, " Oh, do let's go up—surely you don't need whisky after all that Cointreau—"

In her bedroom, she pushed the pad, pen and matches under the mattress, bounded out to the top landing, and leaned over the banister. " Fire, fire! " she cried shrilly.

Their faces were upturned to her as she paused at the top of the lower staircase. " Aunt Cora," she babbled, a degree less excitedly, " There's a fire outside! I think it's the hammock—

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I went into the bathroom and looked out of the window—"

Mrs. Miller had come bustling out of the kitchen. The three ran out of the porch door. Kieron had snatched the cone-shaped fire-extinguisher from the hall cupboard. Mrs. Miller, shouting, "Ernest's besom to beat it out—" had heaved after him. Rose, clutching her nightdress, pattered well in their rear. But there were no flames now. Only an iron frame and a badly-singed canopy remained over the smouldering, acrid-smelling black remnants scattered where the seat cushions had been on the wire base. Cora stopped Kieron from wasting the fire-extinguisher.

"I'll get a bucket of water," Mrs. Miller exclaimed. "However did it happen—not lightning, surely? But everything's been dry as a bone in the heat." She hastened away, unaware of Rose under a birch tree several yards distant from the ruin.

"Luckily the grass is dewy—" Kieron began, sounding puzzled.

"You must have dropped a lit cigarette end in it, of course," Cora said irritably. She turned away, but added, "The insurance will cover it. The price before it was reduced at Marshall's sale was sixty pounds, and I shall claim that. What an evil smell!" A handkerchief to her nose, she too did not notice Rose.

"It couldn't have been *your* cigarette end, of course!" Kieron called towards her disappearing figure.

Rose stepped from under the birch. "All she can think of is what it cost!" Kieron swung round, looked at her, and was silent. "She claimed for a fur rug last winter—said it had been stolen from her car, and when she found it in a box in the garage she didn't pay the insurance firm back." Kieron, still not speaking, advanced a step or two to see her face clearer. He trod on something in the grass and picked it up; he gazed at it; he smelt it. "She ought to be ashamed of herself," Rose pronounced, her eyes fixed steadily beyond him.

Kieron stepped close to her. He looked down at her hair. It was strewn with gleaming silver threads, and several of them veined the impassive face and clung to the thin, faintly palpitating neck. He peered at her torn, damp-patched nightdress, at her soaked red velvet slippers. He put out a hand, but she shrank back from the touch. "Here," he whispered, his other hand holding out the stopper of the petrol can, "take this." Her face remained impassive, but she took the stopper; she hesitated, then turned to go, and tossed it under the birch tree, with indifference.

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IN that bitter cold, water turns to dry dust for the lightest breath of air to play with. There is no landscape and there are no landmarks. A hillock of powdered snow ripples and flattens; the ripples coil and convolute, and all in half an hour you have a head of hair, a brain, the helix of a freakish ear, a diagram of unearthly trajectories, and at last a pure valley virginally ridged.

Here, twenty-nine of the thirty-two winds blow from the south towards the Pole, and they make chaos. Hence, when day broke, the man called Josef who had been stalking his enemy around the base of a high hill, discovered that he was lying opposite him at the rim of a bowl of ice five hundred yards in diameter, scooped even and delicately stippled and burnished by some whim of the night wind.

Josef, though one of those born marksmen who point a gun as an ordinary man might point a finger, was somewhat near-sighted. He aimed by a certain combination of intuitions rather than by vision, as all great shots must do at long range. They must perceive rather than see; they must sense where the target is likely to be by the time a plated pellet no bigger than a cigarette butt has travelled its ordained distance.

Josef knew that the eye is fallible. He depended upon a sort of diagnostic guess-work. Although he wore thick spectacles, tinted blue against the snow blink, and used a rifle with nothing but a common aperture-sight, he was almost inevitably deadly even at twice the distance that separated him from the other man. If that man kept still for only three seconds, Josef knew that he could drop his bullet somewhere between the man's shoulders as he lay prone on the ice.

Even in clear weather a man half a thousand yards away and

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standing upright is scarcely a quarter of an inch tall when looked at down a rifle barrel over open sights. At a thousand yards that same man is a conjecture. Josef, a theoretician of the long shot, could pinpoint this conjecture; pick it out and cool it off. He knew, as he laid his aim, that in a few moments the speck that was a man in the distance would jerk, sprout limbs, and go kicking down the ice, looking remarkably like a little startled spider as it seems to climb down the air at the end of its invisible filament.

But even as he tightened his hand on the knuckle of his rifle something cracked like a dog whip close to his right ear, and a bullet, cutting into the ice less than a foot from his head, spattered him with tiny splinters. Seconds later he heard, like the beating of stupendous wings, the flapping reverberation of his enemy's shot.

He knew that he must have fired high and wide and that in this still cold air the smoke of his own shot must hang blue against the snow. So he let himself slide downwards a little way and then became still. Familiar with this terrain, and after ten days of this hunting knowing something of the man he had to kill, he guessed that this man would stay where he was for a few seconds. The fact that Josef had only four cartridges left perturbed him little, if at all. In his singularly arranged mind there was no room for doubt. His man was as good as dead . . .

Visualising a certain point a hairsbreadth below and to the left of where the faint smoke of his enemy's last shot clung to the air, he fired again, and then lay flat. But he had miscalculated. His fire was returned. A bullet cut ice and rock a bare six inches from his thigh. The other marksman had not kept still; he had climbed upwards and was shooting down. Now Josef held his fire.

The morning was growing lighter and the sun was at his back. Furthermore, with the dawn a mist was rising out of the ice bowl and he knew that he could, by his peculiar sense of orientation, *feel* his objective at the other side of this mist, let it offer him ever so slight a sign. His white clothes froze to the ice; he became still as a man of ice, watching. Four hundred yards away, perhaps a yard to the vertical he saw a tiny dot of orange light and felt a bullet striking two feet above his head. The claque of the echoes gave the shot a tremendous round of applause. Now Josef reasoned, *He argues that, having slid down I will slide farther down yet, after I have returned his fire.* So he invested rather than gambled another bullet in another exquisitely calculated shot and then scrambled, not down, but upwards, for a distance of about fifty feet.

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The next shot, when it came, puzzled Josef. It came not from the diameter of the bowl, but from a nearer curve. It described a segment. This meant that his enemy was climbing to come level with him. Two more bullets struck close by—perilously close. One screeched off ice, one whined off rock, and the bowl howled and whistled and gibbered before it was quiet again.

Not far away some piled body of ice and shale shifted with a tremendous mutter and went rolling down. The great grey surfaces flung back the noise of its fall again and again, and there came up from below such a billowing of frosty vapour that Josef felt for the moment like some beetle packed in white wool and frozen for dissection. But his ears were too clever to be deceived by even this overwhelming noise. He knew that the shots had come from his right, somewhat above him.

Very swiftly, being a lean and agile man trained to the mountains, he clambered in that direction. Now, apart from a faint, fitful whispering of wind in the crags and a certain hissing of dry snow, there was quiet. Very quietly, very deviously, he climbed eastward. But it seemed that the other man had got between him and the sun, for another shot, which seemed to come right out of the eye of the dawn, came so close that it tugged at his sleeve. He fired at the flash and lay still, assuming that the other man would guess that he had slid to his left. He was right. A bullet splashed where his shoulder would have been if he had moved.

It was evident that if he had been manœuvring himself to within dead certain killing distance of his enemy, his enemy had been playing the same game with him. But the mist, Josef reckoned, was his ally. As he watched, waiting, a brumous swirl of air sent down a tumble of loose frost which covered him like a blanket. He remained motionless. Ten minutes passed, twenty minutes. And now, at last, his enemy came into full view, less than two hundred yards away—a man in a white parka, big as a bear; a perfect target, something impossible to miss.

Josef almost sighed with pleasure under his covering of frost. His sights were on the big man's solar plexus. Josef could have hit him in the eye, if he had so chosen; but since this was his last bullet he decided to deny himself this little private indulgence in sharpshooting. And then, even as he involuntarily dug his toes into the snow and squeezed his trigger, the ground fell away from under him. He cursed himself as he saw the big man's hood snap back as his bullet flicked the tip of it—caught a glimpse of a great red face stubbled with blond beard—and then he was falling feet first over the ice.

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He let his empty rifle slip away, and fell as it seemed for a hundred years over the rim of the ice bowl and down and around in an awful vortex, helpless as a fly flushed away in a lavatory basin. Stone and ice fell with him. By some chance an enormous boulder skated away and, falling more directly, went down ahead of him. Otherwise he must have been crushed like an egg. As it was, he found himself dizzy but unhurt at the bottom of the bowl.

Glancing around, he saw that this depression in the ice was shaped somewhat like a brandy glass. The mouth was only half as wide as the bottom, and the sides were smoothly curved as if by a glass-blower's pipe. Josef said to himself, without emotion, *There is always the incalculable. I have failed. So I must die.*

Then, a hundred feet above, he saw the big man's head, and heard him say, " Can you hear me? I don't want to shout. Vibration can start rockfall—avalanche—savvy? "

" I can hear you," said Josef, in good but stilted English. " You had better speak your own language—your accent in mine is execrable." *Execrable . . . execrable . . . execrable . . .* grumbled the echoes. He went on, " You have won. I will keep perfectly still if you will have the kindness to shoot me through the head."

" Be glad to oblige, but have used my last bullet. If you want to shoot yourself, of course, that's your affair."

" I have no pistol."

" Have you a rope? "

" Yes. But I think my wrist is broken."

" Well, keep still and I'll come down and haul you out."

" Why? We have been trying to kill each other for ten days."

" That's a different matter from leaving you to die in the ice."

" I see." Now the big man warily explored the lip of the bowl, until he found a kind of rocky excrescence split by the cold as if by a wedge. He had picked up Josef's rifle and noted that it was empty. It was a beautiful weapon, a Mannlicher, which must have cost some sportsman every penny of five hundred dollars. He observed that the butt bore a baronial coronet inlaid in silver, and the monogram *J von B*. He wondered, in passing, who the Baron *J von B* had been and, (being a sentimental man at bottom), hoped that he had died easy. Then, with a sigh, he began to hammer the Mannlicher's barrel into the crack, using his own heavier rifle for a hammer. His purpose was to improvise a smooth strong peg to which he might attach the fifty-foot rope which he carried coiled between hip and shoulder. He called down into the bowl, " Get your rope ready. How long is it? "

" About twenty yards."

" That ought to do it."

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The big man tied one end of the rope about his waist and then, paying out the slack, lowered himself into the bowl. The sides had more curvature than he had calculated. For half a minute he hung, spinning dizzily until, noticing a ragged crack in the ice, he swung inwards and gripped it with one hand. He carried with him one of those combination tools that are part hatchet and part pick. With this he began swiftly and dexterously to cut hand-and-foot-holds.

Josef, from the bottom, watched him with blank curiosity. When the big man was forty feet down he said, " Mind your head, down there—I'm going to let myself slip." Then, supporting himself on the rope with one hand he unhitched the loop which held him and came sliding down.

Josef's face relaxed in a half smile of amusement. " If you want my rope, you will please take it for yourself. My right hand is quite useless. What are you going to do? "

" Well, first I'll catch my breath." He fumbled in an inside pocket and found cigarettes and a lighter. " Do you want a cigarette? "

" Thank you, no, I am a non-smoker."

The big man lit a cigarette and unslung a canteen. " I've got some whisky here if you'd like a drink."

" Normally I do not drink alcohol, but I will take a little for quick energy." Josef swallowed a mouthful with a grimace, handed back the canteen and said, " I can assure you, my friend, that if it is your intention to try to extract information from me by means of torture, it will be a wasted effort. I know nothing of value to your people—"

"It is my intention," the other man said, imitating Josef's clipped accent, " it is my intention to take this rope a few foot-holds up to my rope's end and make a knot called a sheet-bend. Then it is my intention to tie this end around you under the arms, climb back up to the top and haul you up. Your wrist is twisted, you say? Well, you've got your feet, I guess, and one good hand to help yourself with."

" And then? " the little man asked.

" I don't know about ' then.' Do as you're told now." So saying, the big man went to work with his pick-headed hatchet. The bowl sang like crystal. An hour passed before the ropes were joined and Josef made fast. " Let's hope that gunbarrel holds," the big man said, " or things might get a bit difficult . . . As a matter of curiosity, shrimp, don't you ever say thank you? "

" If it pleases you to hear the sound of the words—thank you. I have told you that there is nothing for you to gain by what you

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are doing. Either you are very stupid, or you act with some motive too deep for me to fathom. I have said thank you. Are you satisfied? "

The big man shrugged and began to climb hand over hand. Watching, Josef thought that the thin rope must inevitably snap under that vast bulk. But for all his size, the big man seemed to have something of the spider about him. Four times he swung to catch invisible fissures and promontories. At last, at the top, he hung clinging to the rope with feet and knees alone while he cut a place for his fingers in the ice. Then he was over and gone.

At the top he paused for another breathing spell and smoked another cigarette. Then, calling out, " Take it easy and grab the notches in the ice," he braced his feet against the split rock and began to haul, grunting.

The little man came up with surprising ease. In ten minutes the two were sitting side by side on the rock, the big man smoking and Josef nursing his right hand in his left armpit.

The big man was the first to speak. He said, " God damn you, do you know the meaning of the American expression, ' in a jam? ' "

" It is, I-believe, a slang word meaning ' predicament.' Are you in a predicament? If so, you have nobody to blame but yourself. I am at a loss, however, to know the nature of this predicament."

" You talk like a goddam schoolteacher."

" Not at all. I am literate, you are not. That is all."

" You are a saboteur, a spy, and a killer," said the other, looking at him with mixed wonder and dislike. Then he said slowly, " There's something about your kind of people I'll never understand. I understand how a point of view can change. I understand how you can be educated to look at things in such-and-such a way. But there are certain fundamentals surely? "

" Such as? "

" Well, say common gratitude. I could have left you to die."

" But you did not. Why did you not? I will tell you why. You decided to ' save my life ' as you put it. To gratify an outmoded and decadent taste for the romantic. I have no such taste. My conceptions and my outlook are materialistic. In the past ten days we have been hunting each other. We must have exchanged a hundred shots apiece. Ten times you have come within an inch of killing me. In passing let me compliment you on your marksmanship. It was your duty to shoot me just as it was my duty to shoot you if I could."

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" I know. I've killed dozens of men. But our kind of sentiment stops at leaving a man alone to die in the ice. Incidentally I am not illiterate. For your information, I am a Master of Arts . . . So, as I said, I find myself in a jam or predicament."

Josef said, with a thin smile, " Now you see just why your system is bound to fail, and upon what false moralities your way of thinking is based. There is no reality in you, no sense of proportion. You live in a fairy tale. I see you over my rifle sights at five hundred yards, you are a speck; I see you at five feet and you are a huge lump of protoplasm. Either way you are execrable to me. I spit upon the Pathos of Distance! What, if under the microscope the germ of a disease is magnified to the size of a dog, am I to caress it and let it lick my face? I walk through the streets of one of your decadent cities, and rub shoulders with a million of your kind—talk with them, eat with them, if the impulse moves me, sleep with them. They are no less obnoxious in that I can see the whites of their eyes.

" But you—I know your kind. In you, propinquity breeds sentiment, and your sentiment stinks. Seen from the air a city looks like a bit of tissue, with the arterial roads like nerve cells, et cetera, and the bursting of a stick of bombs strikes your poetic imagination as looking like the blossoming of little white flowers. Eh? Hypocrite, where is your predicament? "

The big man said, " I concede that there is a certain something in what you say. And still it seems to me that in certain circumstances when you magnify your awareness that a man is a man you sharpen your perception of the difference between Good and Evil. I detest you, and everything you stand for. But I *cannot* leave you to die alone in the ice. And here's the predicament—civilised people sometimes find themselves in such predicaments. It will be hard for you to understand. If I had put a bullet through your head—and I wish to God I had—I should have said, ' Mission accomplished,' and thought no more of the matter. But now that I've saved your life, in some mysterious way I feel morally indebted to you; in a way grateful to you. And my predicament is, that I don't know what to do with you."

Josef said, " As you say, this is something I would not understand, and I should hope that I would have no desire to understand it. Let me help you out of your predicament. You are rendered impotent to hurt me because you have saved my life. But I, whose life you saved, find in my heart no trace of mercy towards you, on that account."

" No. You'd be consistent in that, I'd guess. ' The end justifies the means '—that's what you'd say."

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" And what would *you* say? " Josef asked, with a polite sneer.

" I'd say that every means is an end in itself. Like, say, a span in a bridge. Your bridge won't stand up."

" And your imagery is as banal as your reasoning is puerile. You bore me. Let us return to your ' predicament,' and have done with this tomfoolery. Have you a pistol? "

" No."

" Ah, but I have—"

Josef's right hand came out from under his armpit holding a small black revolver. He fired straight into the big man's face. Quick as he was, the big man was quicker. His great hand moved fast and automatically as an eyelid blinks. It closed over the other man's little fist, pistol and all. The bullet grazed his ear. Bone snapped. The revolver fell into the snow.

Then, with something like tenderness, the big man said, " I thank you kindly. This puts matters back on the old footing. It simplifies everything."

He picked Josef up by the neck and one leg, raised him above his head and, handling him like a dry branch, broke his back on the edge of the rock. " You talk too much," he said. " You should have shot me before. Vanity is the downfall of your kind; you materialists have no sense of reality—"

Then he stopped, for he was addressing a dead man.

He kicked the body into the ice bowl. An avalanche of shale chased it down. The big man stood for a minute, thinking. Then he recoiled his rope, slung his empty rifle over his shoulder, and went back down the hard trail southward and westward.

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TRADE WINDS

In the harbour, in the island, in the Spanish Seas,
Are the tiny white houses and the orange-trees,
And day-long, night-long, the cool and pleasant breeze
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

There is the red wine, the nutty Spanish ale,
The shuffle of the dancers, the old salt's tale,
The squeaking fiddle, and the soughing in the sail
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

And o' nights there's fire-flies and the yellow moon,
And in the ghostly palm-trees the sleepy tune
Of the quiet voice calling me, the long low croon
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

JOHN MASEFIELD

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It was all there—in the bag!

moment of error

by THURMAN WARRINER

HE stood in the lounge bar of the Hotel Mirimar in Birmingham, a spare, tight-lipped, bony-nosed man. On his ninth day out of jail, Major Ppryde had seven pounds, fifteen shillings and fourpence left, plus a sealed envelope in his hip pocket containing enough to tax his car for the next four months. The rest had been spent on a good suit.

He had come back to Birmingham, on the day of his release, because the car was garaged there and he knew the city well and it had always been good in the old days for a few pickings. By now his hair was presentable, his hands reasonably smooth. He was approaching the moment when he would feel capable of facing the world again. At first, he had jumped whenever he heard a voice over his shoulder. That was after two and a half years. He wondered what it would be like after twelve and a half . . . And next time, it could be that long. The Governor had reminded him of that.

He watched the well-dressed bunch lower down the bar. Two men, two women, laughing and joking, not a care in the world. Curious that people had been dropping in for drinks and going to dinner all through the thirty months of his incarceration. Inside, you are apt to forget how normal things are outside. How life goes on . . .

He would claim the car tomorrow. That would be quite a moment, something to savour and enjoy. He hadn't wanted to drive again till he felt master of himself. Having no luggage to speak of, he had paid in advance for his small gritty room in a commercial hotel near John Bright Street—he used the Mirimar bar only for its comfort and latent possibilities. But daily expenses were playing havoc with his remaining capital. The car was a must.

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Nine days ago, the Governor had talked to him like a Dutch uncle. Major Ppryde knew that all prisoners due for release had to endure that ordeal. He hadn't been looking forward to it but the old boy had certainly gone out of his way to be decent.

" Sit down, Ppryde. I don't have to give you the usual blah, though in all sincerity I *do* hope we never meet again. Any plans? "

" Nothing hard and fast, sir."

" Care for a drink?" The Governor poured scotch and pushed a silver cigarette box across the desk. " I'm making an exception in your case, Major, because I've always felt you're sound at heart. I know your record, but from my own knowledge of you I suspect there are things you wouldn't do—even for money."

" Thank you, sir." The Major's tone was faintly sardonic.

" It's so damned easy to get back here, Major, and so damned difficult to stay out."

" So I've gathered from other—residents."

" I'm not preaching. But I know how you must have felt, Ppryde. You get accustomed to a way of life, a social pattern. Then it's blown to hell by some wind of change, and you think yourself entitled to take what can't be earned."

" That's a pleasant way of putting it, sir. The Judge called it a series of deliberate, calculated frauds."

The Governor laughed. " He was right, of course. But you're cursed with a great deal of inbuilt charm, Major, and it must be difficult to avoid using it in circumstances where it would obviously show a profit."

Ppryde rolled the whisky round his tongue. It was good to taste it again. " I intend to keep out, sir," he said.

" Good for you! This is your second time inside, Major. Next time, it will be a long stretch. That's when you start to rot. I wouldn't like to see that happening to you."

Damn decent fellow, the Governor. You had to admit that. Only nine days ago! It seemed a year.

He stayed in bed late next morning, then walked briskly across the vast expanses of the Brave New Bull Ring to a surviving street beyond the coach station. The little garage and repair-shop was unchanged. He wondered how much Charlie Blake knew and how much he had guessed, and whether, two and a half years ago, he had quite swallowed the story that the Major had been appointed to the Belfast office and wouldn't need the car for a while.

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Charlie was a pale, earnest young man, perpetually dripping grease and sweat. "Great to see you again, Major!" he said, rubbing sawdust on his hands. "I got busy on her just as soon as you came through on the blower. Take a look at her!"

The Major followed him. There she stood, in the back bay. His eyes were moist as he looked at her.

"Beautiful as ever!" he said. "Beautiful, Charlie!"

"Here's your five-year ticket, sir. You'll want that when you tax her. Unless you'd like me to go round to the post office? You could have a cuppa while I'm gone. I've just put the kettle on the ring."

The Major ripped open the envelope and handed over the necessary cash.

"They never made a better model, sir. The old two-point-two . . . Used to call it the Major's Car."

"So they did, Charlie!"

He opened the door and slid behind the wheel. "Good old girl!" he whispered. "My one true love!"

He was still sitting there, the cuppa forgotten, when Charlie came back. The seven pounds, fifteen shillings and fourpence was down now to six pounds, three and eight, and half filling the tank would make an appreciable hole in that. Something had to be done—quickly.

It had been pointed out to him by chaplain and social workers galore that no man need steal because no man need starve. There was always National Assistance. *And don't let false pride prevent you from claiming what, after all, is your right as a citizen.* But it's tricky to draw National Assistance unless you have an address, and for that you need money.

It never occurred to him to sell the car. Even the recurring nightmare of ten more years in that high-walled hell would never induce him to do that. He could only hope that Colonel Lucey would come to the rescue. The alternative was his own version of the old confidence racket. Streamlined, played in hotels and airport lounges, but the same in all essential details as shuffling the walnuts or flogging Sahara seaweed.

And that led right back to the Governor's office, with the Governor welcoming him back instead of waving farewell.

A lot depended on Colonel Lucey. And, of course, on the car . . .

He called at that sleazy little hotel for his two bags, then drove slowly out of town along the Warwick road. Slowly, because he was not yet accustomed to the roar and rush of traffic. In prison, one leads a very sheltered life.

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Colonel Lucey, living in retirement among the Chilterns, had always had a soft spot for the Major. "Keep in touch, my boy—keep in touch!" he had said. "And if ever you need a leg-up, don't be afraid to say so."

The Old Man never said a thing he didn't mean, and that invitation would be as valid now as it was ten years ago. But he detested humbugs and liars. Any attempt to pull the wool over his eyes would be fatal. *I'm down on my luck, sir. I've been a damn fool, done a spell inside, can't get a job. My car's worth five hundred. Keep her as security and lend me a couple of hundred.*

There it was—a down-to-earth request. With a couple of hundred he could run straight for a week or two, dig something up. And, by gad, he would run straight!

The wooded hollow where Colonel Lucey's home was situated lay between Baldon and Dedbury. Past Princes Risborough, he turned east towards the rolling chalk hills. The car was going like a bomb. Good old girl! Be leaving you again soon. Wait for me—don't be unfaithful. Won't be so long this time before we're together again, then no more long separations.

He came to a pair of fine wrought-iron gates under a canopy of beeches. The Colonel's place was a small country manor, a remote and peaceful retreat. Major Ppryde had been here once before, after a regimental dinner some years ago. The Old Man had brought a few of them home for a last drink. Since then, he had bent his energies towards civilian pursuits—director of this and that in the Wycombes, Ppryde had been told, a local councillor and JP.

A Daimler occupied the space immediately in front of the door. He drove in behind it, leaving space to turn around and take his own car into the roomy garage when the Colonel had written his cheque. He wanted to get the whole thing over and done with as quickly as possible. Two hundred pounds—a mere nothing. Yet it was the platform from which he could reach up towards a decent life.

The front door stood wide open that warm evening, and as he rang the bell he saw a square, rush-matted hall; he smelt the fragrance of long-stemmed roses on the mirror-polished table.

And that was the turning-point, the moment of error . . .

For the Colonel was not alone as he came towards the door. Behind him was a paunchy, self-important little man, a thick-shouldered woman in a dark, rustling dress, and a girl tall and fair; the sort of girl who had greatly attracted the Major in days not long since gone.

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Even then, he could have been resolute; he could have asked the Colonel for a brief word in private, and been gone within minutes. But when Colonel Lucey stretched out his hand in welcome, the Major took that fatal step into the hall.

"Ppryde!" the Colonel said delightedly. "My dear fellow, how good to see you!"

"It's been a long time," the Major said, gripping the outstretched hand.

"Where have you been? I was thinking about you only the other day."

So the Major's disgrace had not come to the Old Man's ears. "Kicking my heels in Belfast for the past couple of years, sir. You're looking remarkably fit."

"Nothing wrong with me but age . . . Come in, dear boy! Mrs. Larne, this is an occasion. I must have mentioned Ppryde to you—Adrian Ppryde?"

He hadn't altered. The same clipped, white moustache, the tight-skinned, fresh-complexioned face. He indicated the paunchy man on his left. "Mr. Larne, one of my co-directors, Mayor of Baldon this year . . . And their daughter. Daphne, my dear—Adrian!"

It was a warm, if slightly tangled introduction. They moved out of the hall, into a big room overlooking the beech woods.

"I have relations in Belfast," Mr. Larne said in a hoarse voice. "Same name—solicitors."

"I managed to steer clear of the legal profession while I was there," the Major said, and Colonel Lucey nodded approval.

"Wise man . . . Daphne, I'm pretty sure Adrian would like a drink."

The Major turned slowly to meet her eyes. Steady, beautiful eyes, grey and cool as the sea. "It's a hot, thirsty day," he said. "May I have beer?"

"Your luck's out," the Colonel said. "I never drink the stuff and my housekeeper seems to run the stock low. Larne was just saying he'd go down to the Seven Stars. Let Daphne mix you something. Or there's sherry . . . We'll be having dinner within half an hour."

The Major stiffened. "But I merely called in passing, sir."

"Nonsense! Haven't seen you in years—can't have you running off without a meal."

"Then sherry, if I may."

Daphne! He hadn't encountered that name for a long time. It had gone out, swamped under a tide of Elizabeths and Janes and Sarahs. *Daphne!* She smiled as he took the glass from her.

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There was a touch of colour in her face. And for some reason, the Major coughed and straightened his tie again.

He realised, during dinner and after, how completely his course had been changed by that single moment of error. He could no longer admit to the Colonel that he was a jailbird. He had lied fluently, deceived the honest and admiring Larnes, entertained their daughter with tales of personal adventure that had never happened upon land or sea. The picture he would present to Colonel Lucey now, if he admitted the truth, would be of a smooth, accomplished liar, a man on the make. If it were not for the girl, he would make some excuse to get off the premises as quickly as possible.

But she did something to him, that girl. She stirred old desires and chivalries; she appealed to all that he had once been, in the days when Colonel Lucey had known him better.

He was looking at the ring on her finger. He had asked, lightly, why her fiancé was not here with her.

She twirled the ring, gazing dreamily through the open window at the darkening garden.

"He works such long hours. He's one of those terribly conscientious people, Timothy, who never let up."

"That's an admirable trait. And he certainly has something to work for. What does he do?"

"He's chief accountant for Proteus Products. That's one of the firms Colonel Lucey is interested in."

"You don't sound very enthusiastic."

"No? I know I *should* be, because Timothy's a quite important man already. But Baldon's such a small place and there's so little to talk about, so little adventure."

"Adventure's an overrated commodity," the Major said seriously, as if uttering a profound truth.

"You can afford to say that because your life's one great adventure."

"I suppose there's something in that," he agreed, wondering what she would say if she knew the facts. He had told it so often before, that adventure with the sixteen-wheel truck in the Western Desert. Sometimes he tried to recall how and when he had thought it all up.

"You're so easy to talk to," she said. "There's the feeling that you understand."

Young, unspoilt, incredibly naïve . . . "Of course I do! It's the tolerant understanding of an old man."

"Nonsense! You're not old."

"I'm forty-three," he said, clipping seven years off the tally.

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"You don't look as much. Honestly you don't, Adrian."

"It's the bitter truth," he said, shaking his head sadly and wishing that it were.

Her mother and father were talking to Colonel Lucey in the next room. The Colonel was pouring a drink for Mrs. Larne, and was saying to her husband, "I'm damned sorry about the beer, Larne. If I'd known you were coming—"

The Major moved towards the door. "You didn't know I was coming either, sir. I'll bring something in. Where's this local pub of yours?"

"But my dear fellow, I couldn't allow you—"

"You couldn't prevent me, sir."

"I said I'd go down," Larne put in.

"My car's at the door. The Seven Stars, did I hear you say?"

"A mile down the road, then up to the left. If you insist upon going, Daphne would show you."

"Of course I will!" she agreed.

They went out to the car. Major Ppryde swung into the road, pleasantly conscious of her nearness beside him. That subtle hint of perfume, the gleam of flaxen hair against the old leather.

"I can't imagine Timothy with a car like this," she sighed.

"And I can't imagine myself in any other kind. I like driving hard."

"And living hard, playing hard?"

"You could say that."

"She's a beauty!"

"Yes, and very feminine. I talk to her, you know—confide in her, ask her advice. Like any woman, she's wilful and stubborn at times, but very rewarding when firm handling reduces her to submission."

"And you expect women to be submissive?"

"The point is that they prefer to be."

They came to the left turn. Their lights cut a white tunnel under the arching branches. No more was said till they came to the pub, an ancient place with a gallows-like sign by the roadside.

"Coming in for a drink?" he asked.

"Why not?"

In the snug, a fire roared under blackened rafters. "Something—adventurous?" he asked, and she nodded. "Right, leave it to me."

He ordered the drinks and told the landlord to put a dozen brown ales in the boot. Casually he dropped a fiver—his last—on the counter.

"How strange that you should come today!" she said when he

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brought the drinks. "Just when we happened to be there."

"It was my lucky day."

"And mine . . . I wonder what Timothy would say?"

"Could we forget Timothy for the next few minutes? You know quite well what he would say—and so do I."

"He wouldn't understand."

"And I couldn't blame him."

"Have you ever been married, Adrian?"

"No."

That was one question he could answer truthfully.

"I wonder why not?"

"Never found the right woman, I suppose."

The usual trite answer, given with precisely the right touch of regret and justifiable self-pity.

After a while, he touched her empty glass. "Again?"

"No. We ought to go."

"You're wise," he said. "It's useful, knowing when to go."

Back in the car, he sat with one hand resting lightly on the wheel, frowning into the surrounding darkness.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked.

"You."

It was not quite true. He was working out how much the beer and their drinks had set him back. Roughly, his assets now stood at three pounds ten.

"When you go away tonight, you'll forget all about me," she said.

"Will I?"

He half turned in the seat, looking down at her. Then, slowly and deliberately, he kissed her, his hands under her arms, holding her body seductively close. He kissed her again and again, with the unhurrying, fastidious appreciation of a connoisseur in such matters.

One does not gulp good brandy or draw too hard on a superlative cigar . . .

They sat round the fire, its glow lighting their faces. The evening had turned cool. He knew that Daphne's eyes scarcely left his face. Since those moments of kissing in the car, she had been like fine, pliant clay in his hands.

He had the gift of being able to talk and think at the same time. He was thinking now . . . From losing a little treasure, he had come to the point of gaining a greater.

How much would old Larne be worth? The Colonel's co-director, Mayor of Baldon this year. Ah, what a plum! And all above board, all straight as a die. *In six easy lessons, you too*

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can be a co-director. Why not? Distinguished friends, solid background, adoring young wife—why not?

It was approaching midnight. He glanced at his watch and got up.

"So early?" the Colonel objected. "The night's young."

"Not for me," Ppryde told him. "At ten in the morning I've a directors' meeting at the Grosvenor."

"When shall we see you again?" Larne asked.

"One of these days. Now I've broken the ice, so to speak, I'll keep in touch."

"How about the weekend? Why not come over to my place? Baldon Grove, across the town from here. Come down on Saturday, stay as long as you please."

The Major rubbed his bony nose. Daphne was looking at him with strange intensity, her eyes wide, her lips a little parted.

It was all in the bag! Within a week, that ring would be off her finger. And he had always fancied a country wedding. Village church, bells ringing, tenantry cheering.

He could imagine the necessary confession, on their honeymoon in Italy or Greece. The exact note of contrition would be in his voice, shaking it a little . . .

Daphne, I've got to tell you the truth—you'll have to know sooner or later. I've had a run of filthy luck. I was dead broke when I came to the Colonel's place that night. The only decent thing to do was walk out, forget you. But—Oh God, I was so much in love with you!

And he knew what she would say. *It doesn't matter, darling. Nothing matters. I've all the money we'll ever need. You'll soon be on your feet again, and till then you can have anything you want.*

He would try to get on his feet again, certainly. And even if he failed, life would still be good though a trifle humiliating.

"I'll be in London on Saturday morning," Larne said. "Tell me where to pick you up, Ppryde."

The Major was still looking at Daphne. In imagination, his hands were under her arms again and the fragrant softness of her face against his mouth.

He closed his eyes for a moment. The shock of that sudden, unidentifiable emotion had rocked him like a blow.

It didn't occur to him that he was in love with her. He had never loved any living thing but himself, and at this age it was scarcely probable that he would change. But she would grow, she would mature, this unsophisticated fool of a girl who had

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fallen so easily for his smooth line. And if ever those eyes were hard and accusing when they looked into his, he would want to drown in whisky or water.

He shook his head, like a man coming up from the depths. As the Governor had said, there were some things he couldn't do—even for money.

"Couldn't promise anything definite for a few weeks," he said easily. "I'm due at Marseilles on Saturday—joining a yachting party. Promised Dennis and Lorna I'd be there by noon."

It was a gift, being able to think up situations and names at a moment's notice. An absolute gift.

It took the Major ten minutes to disengage himself. It had been a wonderful evening, Mrs. Larne said—so *stimulating* and *amusing*. And the Colonel's grip was like iron as they shook hands. "Take care of yourself, my boy. We belong to a dwindling band."

"Yes," the Major said, looking past him at Daphne. "The League of Old Men."

He touched Daphne's fingers. "I'll send you a wedding-present," he told her. "A ton of Western Desert sand for the children to play in."

Striding jauntily to his car, he wondered if Western Desert sand is the same as any other. He wouldn't know. He had never been there.

He pulled on to the nearest lay-by and totted up his assets. Three pounds, twelve and three—he hadn't been far out.

He reached for the yellow duster and began to polish the facia board. *Now we're up against it, old girl, now we've got to face up to it, my one and only true love. There'll never be another chance like that one. We've got to do something, quick!*

Three pounds, twelve and three . . . Sleep in the car tonight, have the suit pressed tomorrow at a while-U-wait. Then London Airport. There was a neat new line he had worked out—worth trying, anyway. He'd have to be careful, too. Can't afford a slip-up. A long stretch next time—*and that's when you start to rot.*

He lay back, staring into the darkness. So near . . . Mayor of Baldon for a father-in-law, money in his pocket, going to bed with Daphne in a month or two—it had all been right there on the plate.

And yet, he felt that somehow he had scored a victory. He must tell the Governor about it, next time they met. The Governor was a damn decent fellow, and no doubt he would understand.

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here there be TYGERS

by RAY BRADBURY

YOU have to beat a planet at its own game," said Chatterton. " Get in, rip it up, poison its animals, dam its rivers, mine it, nail it down, hack away at it, and get the hell out of it when you have what you want. You can't trust planets. They're bound to be bad, bound to be out to get you, especially this far off, a billion miles from nowhere, so you get them first. Tear their skin off, I say. Drag out the minerals and run away before the damn world explodes in your face. That's the way to treat them."

The rocket ship sank down towards planet 7 of star system 84. They had travelled millions upon millions of miles. Earth was far away, her system and her sun forgotten, her system settled and investigated and profited on, and other systems rummaged through and milked and tidied up, and now the rockets of these tiny men were probing out to far universes. In a few months, a few years, they could travel anywhere, for the speed of their rocket was the speed of a god.

" No," said Captain Forester. " I have too much respect for other worlds to treat them the way you want to, Chatterton. It's not my business to rape or ruin, anyway, thank God. I'm glad I'm just a rocket man. You're the anthropologist-mineralogist. Go ahead, do your mining and ripping and scraping. I'll just watch. I'll just go around looking at this new world, whatever it is, however it seems. I like to look. All rocket men are lookers or they wouldn't be rocket men."

They turned and saw the green world rising to meet their ship.

" I wonder what it thinks of us? " said Forester.

" It won't like me," said Chatterton. " By God, I'll see to it it won't like me. And I don't care, you know. I don't give a

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damn. I'm out for the money. Land us over there, will you, Captain; that looks like iron country if I ever saw it."

It was the freshest green colour they had seen since childhood.

Lakes lay like clear blue water droplets through the soft hills; there were no loud highways, signboards or cities. It's a sea of green golf-links, thought Forester, which goes on for ever. A Sunday planet, a croquet-lawn world, where you could lie on your back, clover in your lips, eyes half-shut, smiling at the sky.

" If ever a planet was a woman, this one is."

" Woman on the outside, man on the inside," said Chatterton. " All hard underneath, all male iron, copper, uranium, black sod. Don't let the cosmetics fool you."

He walked to the bin where the Earth Drill waited. Its great screw-snout glittered bluely, ready to stab seventy feet deep and suck out corks of earth, deeper still with extensions into the heart of the planet. Chatterton winked at it. " We'll fix your woman, Forester, but good."

" Yes, I know you will," said Forester, quietly.

The rocket landed. " It's too green, too peaceful," said Chatterton. He turned to the captain. " We'll take our rifles."

" I give orders, if you don't mind."

" Yes, and my company pays our way with millions of dollars of machinery we must protect; quite an investment."

The air on the new planet 7 in star system 84 was good. The port swung open. The men filed out into the greenhouse world.

The last man to emerge was Chatterton, gun in hand.

As Chatterton set foot to the green lawn, the earth trembled. The grass shook. The distant forest rumbled. The sky seemed to blink and darken imperceptibly.

" An earthquake, by God! " Chatterton's face paled.

Everyone laughed. " It doesn't like you, Chatterton."

" Nonsense ! "

The trembling died away at last.

" Well," said Captain Forester, " it didn't quake for us, so it must be that it doesn't approve of your philosophy."

" Coincidence." Chatterton smiled. " Come on now. I want the Drill out here in a half-hour for a few samples."

" Just a moment." Forester stopped laughing. " We've got to clear the area first, be certain there's no hostile people or animals. Besides, it isn't every year you hit on a planet like this; can you blame us if we want to have a look at it? "

" All right. Let's get it over with."

They left a guard at the ship and they walked away over fields and meadows, over small hills and into little valleys, like a bunch

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of boys out hiking on the finest day of the best summer in the most beautiful year in history.

" Hey," said Driscoll, one of the younger crewmen, sniffing the air. " I brought a cricket ball and bat; we'll have a game later. What a wicket! " The men laughed quietly.

" How'd you like the job of mowing all this? " asked Driscoll.

The men stopped.

" I *knew* there was something wrong! " cried Chatterton. " This grass; it's freshly cut! "

" Probably a species of dichondra, always short."

Chatterton spat on the green grass and rubbed it in with his boot. " I don't like it, I don't like it. If anything happened to us, no one on Earth would ever know."

" I often wonder," said Driscoll, " what happened to all those lost expeditions on worlds we'll never try again."

Chatterton eyed the distant forest. " They were shot, stabbed, roasted for dinner. Even as we may be, any minute. It's time we got back to work, Captain! "

They stood at the top of a little rise.

" Feel," said Driscoll, his hands and arms out loosely. " Remember how you used to run when you were a kid, and how the wind felt? You ran and thought any minute you'd fly, but you never quite did."

The men stood remembering. There was a smell of pollen and new rain drying upon a million grass blades.

Driscoll gave a little run. " Feel it, by God, the wind! You know, we have never really flown by ourselves. We have to sit inside tons of metal—we've never flown like birds. Wouldn't it be nice to put your arms out like this—" He extended his arms. " And run." He ran ahead of them, laughing at his idiocy. " And fly! " he cried.

He flew.

Time passed on the silent gold wristwatches of the men standing below. They stared up. And from the sky came a high sound of almost unbelievable laughter.

" Tell him to come down," whispered Chatterton. " He'll be killed."

Nobody heard. Their faces were raised away from Chatterton; they were stunned and smiling. At last Driscoll landed at their feet. " Did you see me? My God, I flew! " They had seen.

" Let me sit down, oh lord, lord." Driscoll slapped his knees, chuckling. " I'm a sparrow, I'm a hawk, God bless me. Go on, all of you, try it! "

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" It's the wind. It picked me up and flew me! " he said, a moment later, gasping and shivering with delight.

" Let's get out of here." Chatterton started turning slowly in circles, watching the blue sky. " It's a trap, it wants us all to fly. Then it'll drop us all at once and kill us. I'm going back to the ship."

" You'll wait for my order," said Forester.

The men were frowning, standing in the warm-cool air, while the wind sighed about them. There was a kite sound in the air, a sound of eternal March.

" I *asked* the wind to fly me," said Driscoll. " And it *did*! "

Forester waved the others aside. " I'll chance it next. If I'm killed, back to the ship, all of you."

" I'm sorry, I can't allow this; you're the captain," said Chatterton. " We can't risk you." He took out his gun. " I should have some sort of authority or force here. This game's gone on too long; I'm ordering us back to the ship! "

" Holster your gun," said Forester quietly.

" Stand still, you idiot! " Chatterton blinked now at this man, now at that. " Haven't you *felt* it? This world's alive, it has a look to it, it's playing with us, biding its time."

" I'll be the judge of that," said Forester. " You're going back to the ship under arrest, if you don't put up that gun."

" If you fools won't come with me, you can die out here. I'm going back to get my samples, and then I'll get out."

" Chatterton! "

" Don't try to stop me! "

Chatterton started to run across the grass. Then, suddenly, he gave a cry.

Everyone shouted and looked up.

" There he goes," said Driscoll.

Chatterton was up in the sky.

Chatterton sat stunned on the side of the hill. The other men sat around him, exhausted and laughing.

" God, wasn't it perfect! " said a man named Koestler.

They had all flown, like orioles and eagles and sparrows, and they were all happy.

" Come out of it, Chatterton, it was fun, wasn't it? " said Koestler.

" It's impossible." Chatterton shut his eyes, tight, tight. " It can't do it. There's only one way for it to do it; it's alive. The air's alive. Like a fist, it picked me up. Any minute now, it can kill us all. It's alive! "

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" All right," said Koestler, " say it's alive. And a living thing must have a purpose. Suppose the purpose of this world is to make us happy."

As if to add to this, Driscoll came flying up, canteens in each hand. " I found a creek. Just wait'll you try it."

Forester took a canteen, nudged Chatterton with it, offering a drink. Chatterton shook his head and drew hastily away. He put his hands over his face. " It's the blood of this planet. Living blood. Drink that, put that inside and you put this world inside you to peer out of your eyes and listen through your ears. No thanks! "

Forester shrugged and drank.

" Wine," he said.

" It can't be! "

" It *is*. Smell it, taste it! A rare white wine! "

" Poison," said Chatterton.

They passed the canteens around.

They idled on through the gentle afternoon, not wanting to do anything to disturb the peace that lay around them. They were like very young men in the presence of great beauty, of a fine and famous woman, afraid that by some word, some gesture, they might turn her face away, avert her loveliness and her kindly attentions. They had felt the earthquake that had greeted Chatterton, thought Forester, and they did not want an earthquake. Let them enjoy this Day After School Breaks Up, this fishing weather. Let them sit under the trees or walk on the tender hills, but let them drill no drillings, test no testings, contaminate no contaminations.

They found a small stream which poured into a boiling water pool. Fish, swimming in the cold creek above, fell glittering into the hot spring and floated cooked, minutes later, to the surface.

Chatterton reluctantly joined the others, eating.

" It'll poison us all. There's always a trick to things like this. I'm sleeping in the rocket tonight. You can sleep out if you want. To quote a map I saw in medieval history: *Here there be tygers.* Some time tonight when you're sleeping, the tigers and cannibals will turn up."

Forester shook his head. " I agree with you, this planet is alive. But it needs us to show off to, to appreciate its beauty. What's the use of a stage full of miracles if there's no audience? "

But Chatterton was busy. He was bent over, being sick.

" I'm poisoned! Poisoned! "

They held his shoulders until the sickness passed. They gave him water. The others were feeling fine.

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" Better eat nothing but ship's food from now on," advised Forester. " It'd be safer."

" We're starting work right now," Chatterton swayed, wiping his mouth. " We've wasted a whole day. I'll work alone if I have to. I'll show this damned thing."

He staggered away towards the rocket.

" He doesn't know when he's well off," murmured Driscoll. " Can't we stop him, Captain? "

" He practically owns the expedition. We don't have to help him; there's a clause in our contract that guarantees refusal to work under dangerous conditions. So . . . do unto this Picnic Ground as you would have it do unto you. No initial-cutting on the trees. Replace the turf on the greens. Pick up your banana-skins . . ."

Now, below in the ship, there was an immense humming. From the storage port rolled the great shining Drill. Chatterton followed it, called directions to its robot radio. " This way, here! "

" The fool."

" Now! " cried Chatterton.

The Drill plunged its long screw-bore into the green grass. Chatterton waved up at the other men. " I'll show it! "

The sky trembled.

The Drill stood in the centre of a little sea of grass. For a moment it plunged away, bringing up moist corks of sod which it spat unceremoniously into a shaking analysis bin.

Now the Drill gave a wrenched, metallic squeal like a monster interrupted at its feed. From the soil beneath it, slow, bluish liquids bubbled up.

Chatterton shouted, " Get back, you fool! "

The Drill lumbered in a prehistoric dance. It shrieked like a mighty train turning on a sharp curve, throwing out angry red sparks. It was sinking. The black slime gave under it in a dark pool.

With a coughing sigh, a series of pants and churnings, the Drill sank into a black scum like an elephant shot and dying, trumpeting, like a mammoth at the end of an Age, vanishing limb by ponderous limb into the pit.

" My God," said Forester under his breath, fascinated. " You know what that is, Driscoll? It's tar. The damn fool machine hit on a tar-pit."

" Listen, listen! " cried Chatterton at the Drill, running about on the edge of the oily lake. " This way, over here." He turned to the other men far away. " Do something, someone! "

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But the Drill was gone.

The tar-pit bubbled and gloated, sucking the hidden monster's bones. The surface of the pool was silent. A last huge bubble rose, expelled a scent of ancient petroleum, and fell apart.

The men came down and stood on the edge of the little black sea. Chatterton stopped yelling.

After a long minute of staring into the silent tar-pool, Chatterton turned and looked at the hills, blindly—at the green rolling lawns. The distant trees were growing fruit now and dropping it, softly, to the ground.

" I'll show it," he said, quietly.

" Take it easy, Chatterton."

" I'll fix it," he said. " I'll show it it can't do this to me."

Chatterton started off back to the ship.

" Wait a minute now," said Forester.

Chatterton ran. " I know what to do, I know how to fix it! "

" Stop him! " said Forester. He ran, then remembered he could fly. "The A-bomb's on the ship, if he should get to that . . ."

The other men had thought of that and were in the air. A small grove of trees stood between the rocket and Chatterton as he ran on the ground, forgetting that he could fly, or afraid to fly, or not allowed to fly, and yelling. The crew headed for the rocket to wait for him, the captain with them. They arrived, formed a line, and shut the rocket port. The last they saw of Chatterton he was plunging through the edge of the tiny forest.

The crew stood waiting.

" That fool, that crazy guy."

Chatterton did not come out on the other side of the small woodland.

" He's turned back, waiting for us to relax our guard."

" Go bring him in," said Forester.

Two men flew off.

Now, softly, a great and gentle rain fell upon the green world.

" The final touch," said Driscoll. " We'd never have to build houses here. Notice it's not raining *on* us. It's raining all around, ahead, behind us. What a world! "

They stood dry in the middle of the blue, cool rain. The sun was setting. The moon, a large one the colour of ice, rose over the freshened hills.

" There's only one thing more this world needs."

" Yes," said everyone, thoughtfully, slowly.

" We'll have to go looking," said Driscoll. " It's logical. The wind flies us, the trees and streams feed us, everything is alive. Perhaps if we asked for companionship . . ."

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" I've thought for a long time, today and other days," said Koestler. " We're all bachelors, been travelling for years, and tired of it. Wouldn't it be nice to settle down somewhere? Here maybe. On earth you work like hell just to save enough to buy a house, pay taxes. The cities stink. Here, you won't even need a house, with this weather. If it gets monotonous you can ask for rain, clouds, snow, changes, and you don't have to work here for anything."

" It'd be boring. We'd go crazy."

" No," Koestler said, smiling. " If life got too soft, all we'd have to do is to repeat a few times what Chatterton said, ' *Here there be tygers!* ' Listen! "

Far away, wasn't there the faintest roar of a giant cat, hidden in the twilight forest?

The men shivered.

" A versatile world," Koestler said dryly. " A woman who'll do anything to please her guests, as long as we're kind to her. Chatterton wasn't kind."

" Chatterton. What about him? "

As if to answer this, someone cried from a distance. The two men who had flown off to find Chatterton were waving at the edge of the woods.

Forester, Driscoll and Koestler flew down alone.

The two men pointed into the forest. " Thought you'd want to see this, Captain. It's damned eerie." One of the men indicated a pathway. " Look here, sir."

The marks of great claws stood on the path, fresh and clear.

" And over here."

A few drops of blood.

A heavy smell of some feline animal hung in the air.

" Chatterton? "

" I don't think we'll ever find him, Captain."

Faintly, faintly, moving away, now gone in the breathing silence of twilight, came the roar of a tiger.

The men lay on the resilient grass by the rocket and the night was warm. " Reminds me of nights when I was a kid," said Driscoll. " My brother and I waited for the hottest night in July and then we slept on the lawn, counting the stars, talking. It was a great night, the best night of the year, and now, when I think back on it, the best night of my life." Then he added, " Not counting tonight, of course."

" I keep thinking about Chatterton," said Koestler.

" Don't," said Forester. " We'll sleep a few hours and take off. We can't chance staying here another day. I don't mean the

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danger that got Chatterton. No. I mean, if we stayed on we'd start liking this world too much. We'd never want to leave."

A soft wind blew over them.

"I don't want to leave now." Driscoll put his hands behind his head, lying quietly. "And it doesn't want us to leave."

"If we go back to Earth and tell everyone what a lovely planet it is, what then, Captain? They'll come smashing in here and ruin it."

"No," said Forester, idly. "First, this planet wouldn't put up with a full-scale invasion. I don't know what it'd do, but it could probably think of some interesting things. Secondly, I like this planet too much; I respect it. We'll go back to Earth and lie about it. Say it's hostile. Which it would be to the average man, like Chatterton, jumping in here to hurt it. I guess we won't be lying after all."

"Funny thing," said Koestler. "I'm not afraid. Chatterton vanishes—is killed most horribly, perhaps, yet we lie here; no one runs, no one trembles. It's idiotic. Yet, it's right. We trust it, and it trusts us."

"Did you notice, after you drank so much of the wine-water, you didn't want more? A world of moderation."

They lay listening to something like the great heart of this earth beating slowly and warmly under their bodies.

Forester thought, I'm thirsty.

A drop of rain splashed on his lips.

He laughed quietly.

I'm lonely, he thought.

Distantly, he heard soft high voices.

He turned his eyes upon a vision. There was a group of hills from which flowed a clear river, and in the shallows of that river, sending up spray, their faces shimmering, were the beautiful women. They played like children on the shore. And it came to Forester to know about them and their life. They were nomads, roaming the face of this world as was their desire. There were no highways or cities; there were only hills and plains and winds to carry them like white feathers where they wished. As Forester shaped the questions, some invisible answerer whispered the answers. There were no men. These women alone produced the race. The men had vanished fifty thousand years ago. And where were these women now? A mile down from the green forest, a mile over on the wine-stream by the six white stones, and a third mile to the large river. There, in the shallows, were the women who would make fine wives, and raise beautiful children.

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Forester opened his eyes. The other men were sitting up.

" I had a dream."

They had all dreamed.

" A mile down from the green forest . . ."

" . . . a mile over on the wine-stream . . ."

" . . . by the six white stones—" said Koestler.

" —and a third mile to the large river," said Driscoll, sitting there.

Nobody spoke again for a moment. They looked at the silver rocket standing there in the starlight.

" Do we walk or fly, Captain? "

Forester said nothing.

Driscoll said, " Captain, let's stay. Let's never go back to Earth. They'll never come and investigate to see what happened to us, they'll think we were destroyed here. What do you say? "

Forester's face was perspiring. His tongue moved again and again on his lips. His hands twitched over his knees. The crew sat waiting.

" It'd be nice," said the captain.

" Sure."

" But . . ." Forester sighed. " We've got our job to do. People invested in our ship. We owe it to them to go back."

Forester got up. The men still sat on the ground, not listening to him. They stared at the soft hills and the trees and the river running off to other horizons.

" Let's get aboard ship," said Forester, with difficulty.

" Captain . . ."

" Get aboard," he said.

The rocket rose into the sky. Looking back, Forester saw every valley and every tiny lake.

" We should've stayed," said Koestler.

" Yes, I know."

" It's not too late to turn back."

" I'm afraid it is." Forester adjusted the port telescope.

" Look now."

Koestler looked.

The face of the world was changed.

Tigers, dinosaurs, mammoths appeared. Volcanoes erupted, cyclones and hurricanes tore over the hills in a welter and fury of weather.

" Yes, she was a woman all right," said Forester. " Waiting for visitors for millions of years, preparing herself, making herself beautiful. She put on her best face for us. When Chatterton

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treated her badly, she warned him a few times, and then, when he tried to ruin her beauty, she eliminated him. She wanted to be loved, like every woman, for herself, not for her wealth. So now, after she had offered us everything, we turn our backs. She's the woman scorned. She let us go, yes, but we can never come back. She'll be waiting for us with *those* . . ." He nodded to the tigers and the cyclones and the boiling seas.

" Captain," said Koestler.

" Yes."

" It's a little late to tell you this. But just before we took off, I was in charge of the airlock. I let Driscoll slip away from the ship. He wanted to go. I couldn't refuse him. I'm responsible. He's back there now on that planet."

They both turned to the viewing port.

After a long while, Forester said, " I'm glad. I'm glad one of us had enough sense to stay."

" But he's dead by now! "

" No, that display down there is for us, perhaps a visual hallucination. Underneath all the tigers and lions and hurricanes, Driscoll is quite safe and alive, because he's her only audience now. Oh, she'll spoil him rotten. He'll lead a wonderful life, he will, while we're slugging it out up and down the system looking for but never finding a planet quite like this again. No, we won't try to go back and rescue Driscoll. I don't think she would let us anyway. Full speed ahead, Koestler, make it full speed." The rocket leapt forward into greater acceleration.

And just before the planet dwindled away in brightness and mist, Forester imagined he could see Driscoll very clearly, walking away down from the green forest, whistling quietly, all of the fresh planet around him, a wine-creek flowing for him, baked fish lolling in the hot springs, fruit ripening in the midnight trees, and distant forests and lakes waiting for him to happen by.

Driscoll walked away across the endless green lawns, near the six white stones, beyond the forest to the edge of the large bright river.

WHAT A DISPLAY!

An old connoisseur of Morocco
Liked his ladies baroque and rococo;
Such ladies are rare,
But with patience and care
He collected them pòco a pòco.

IVOR TREBY

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Eyes of Love

by Harry Mark Petrakis

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AUTUMN came and passed quickly that year. Almost overnight the last dry, brown leaves burnt in the twilight street fires. The nights began to turn cold, and in my basement flat the steam sputtered and hissed through the overhead radiators. I pushed my bed away from the window in the bedroom and pulled a woollen blanket from the shelf in the cupboard.

I didn't really mind the winter. I preferred it to the false faces of spring and summer, the ephemeral masks of buds and flowers that concealed the desolation underneath. The season I liked best of all was autumn, when the air smelt definably of death, and the declining days wore their proper raiment.

I was a writer of stories and a couple of novels that had been reviewed well in the *New York Times*. They produced a small spasm of activity in the book-review columns and a sparse display with my picture in one of the downtown bookshops. Then, like the tide coming in across a beach littered with debris, the cut-glass fragments of my fame were once more submerged in anonymity. But writing was still the only thing I wanted to do, even though I had realised years before how senseless was a writer's dream that he could, within the pages of a book, cultivate a garden beyond the wasteland of his death. In addition, the stories provided me a meagre living and saved me from forty hours a week in another man's vineyard.

Each day I rose early in the morning and slipped into worn sneakers and old trousers. I enjoyed a pot of hot, rousing coffee and then wrote at my typewriter till afternoon, when the children broke loose in squealing joy from school. There was a basement flat similar to my own across the narrow court, and it was occupied by a piano teacher I had never seen. Each day after school her students banged out a shrill and discordant series of scales. To evade their wretched hammering I walked down to the corner pub and lingered for a couple of hours over beer.

In the twilight I returned to my flat and shaved and dressed in more formal clothes. I ate a steak in a neighbourhood restaurant and marinated it with a glass or two of red wine. When I sold a story and had a new cheque in my pocket, I treated myself to a full bottle of good wine. Then, with my normally sombre nature submerged beneath the laughter of the grape, I would ardently search out some young lady in a pub and tempt her to join my celebration. This was a kind of gaiety that could not survive the sober dawn, and in the morning I had a mountain of a head and a tongue like the moss on a rock.

It was on such a night in that autumn, preparing for a small celebration because the cheque for a sale had been meagre, that I

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passed the piano teacher's flat. Through a partially raised shade I saw that she was a young woman with dark, long hair sitting on a bench before an upright piano. Later in the evening, after I had consumed a half-bottle of wine, I thought of her again. She had been attractive and young. Each afternoon her talentless students drove me from my rooms, and that seemed a legitimate grievance on which to base a visit. I took along what was left of the bottle of wine.

When I reached her flat, the shades were all drawn closed. I thought she might be asleep or out and then I saw a shadow of movement along the rim of a shade. I rang her bell.

In a moment the door opened just a few inches, and I heard the jangle of a chain. "I beg your pardon," I said, and couldn't see her face. "I live in the basement flat across the court. I was just passing and felt it was time to introduce myself."

She was silent and wary for a moment. "It's a little late, isn't it?" she asked.

"We are artists," I said amiably. "You a musician and I, a writer. We understand that time is the greatest irrelevance of all."

I couldn't be sure in the shadows but it seemed to me she smiled. "I have heard you typing for hours at a time."

"I have heard your students at their lessons," I said. "An unusually talented group."

"I'm sorry if they disturb your work."

"Not at all," I said, "but I would be interested in knowing whether they use hammers on the keys?"

She laughed, a pleasant sound that dispersed some of the wariness.

"My name is Pete Zachary," I said, "and perhaps we could visit for a few moments."

She hesitated a moment longer and then made up her mind. She closed the door and drew off the chain and then opened the door again. With a triumphant swagger I stepped inside her flat.

I followed her into the living room. There was only a small lamp burning on a table in the corner, and most of the room was draped in shadow. The upright piano took up almost one entire wall, and on a couch across from the piano reclined a grey, furry cat that regarded me with ominous, yellow eyes.

Off the living room was a small kitchen similar to my own with a table and two chairs and an assortment of plates and glasses in an open cabinet. There was a large shelf along the wall decorated with several heads of sculpture, carved and polished heads of men

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and women, that seemed suspended without bodies on the wall.

" My name is Andrea," she said, " and the cat is Emily." At the sound of her name the cat rose and stretched indolently and then leapt with a sinister warning to the floor.

" Pleased to meet you both," I said and sat down.

Andrea sat down on an ottoman across the room from the lamp so that she was darkly concealed in shadow. From as much as I could discern, she was an attractive girl, slender-bodied with good legs. Her hair framed her face and the skin of her cheeks gleamed pale in the shadows and gave an impression of ghostly beauty. But the most striking thing about her were her hands. They were pale, paler than the hue of her face, and the fingers flowed from her slim wrists as if they were long-petalled flowers.

" What kind of things do you write? "

" Short stories mostly," I said. " A couple of novels that did nothing. My creations disappear into the water like small pebbles or finish on a table of remainders at fifty cents apiece."

" Are you a beatnik or an angry young man? " she asked, with a trace of humour in her voice.

" I'm not revolting against a thing," I said, and the wine loosened my tongue. " All is vanity and vexation of the spirit. Nothing is worth fighting about." I shook my head. " What about you? What makes a young attractive girl become a teacher to a bunch of piano butchers? "

" That is the way I make my living," she said, " and they're not all butchers. One or two are even very good."

" Things are tough all over," I said, and then realised I was still clutching the half-full bottle of wine. " I was taking some wine home. Would you like a small glass? "

" No, thank you," she said, becoming wary again. " But you have a glass if you like."

I walked towards the cabinet. " This place is laid out exactly like mine," I said. There was a lamp on the cabinet, and I switched it on to locate a glass. I poured an extra glass and carried it to her.

" You really should try a sip," I said. " It's good Sauterne." She raised her head as I reached her. The lamp I had turned on glowed light across her face. She stood staring at a point just beyond my shoulder, not looking at the glass or me, and I realised that she was blind.

I was fiercely shaken and, as if she understood, she spoke quickly to cover my disorder. " I will try a sip," she said, and raised her hand to take the glass from me without a trace of fumbling.

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" I'll have a glass myself," I said, " and then I'd better leave. It is late, and I shouldn't really have disturbed you." I drank my wine quickly.

I hesitated a moment and then walked towards the door. She rose from the ottoman and followed me. We stood for an instant by the door. " I am sorry about the students," she said softly. " I'll make sure my windows are closed."

" That's all right," I said quickly. " Don't worry about me. I'm through writing by then anyway."

I opened the door and walked out. She was a dark, slender figure against the light, her face concealed again in shadow.

" Goodnight, Pete," she said in a calm and pleasant voice.

" Goodnight, Andrea," I said. She closed the door quietly.

Instead of returning to the bar, I went home. Coldly sober by that time, I mourned the impulse that had sent me to her door. If the world were full of grief and affliction, there was no need for a man to search it out. I felt sorry for her, but there was nothing I could do. I went to bed.

In the first total snap of darkness as I closed the lamp, I wondered what her life was like, denied the sight of faces, figures, fruits, and flowers, the red of a sunset, and the green of grass. After a while I was grateful when I could make out dim familiar objects in my room. But there was also a strange serenity about her that I found moving in recollection, the loveliness of her pale, slim fingers and the softness of her voice. It took me a long time to fall asleep.

The rain started the following Friday night and kept falling all day Saturday until late afternoon. I wrote for a while and then sat by the window smoking a cigarette, watching the water strike the streets and sweep in swift currents to the sewers.

I was hungry, and there was nothing in the place to eat. I put on a mac and an old, felt hat and ran to the corner to a Chinese restaurant. I ordered a large carton of chow mein and carried it straight to Andrea's door as if I had meant to do that all along.

She answered the door in slacks and blouse, a yellow ribbon holding back her fine black hair. I had the feeling even before I spoke that she knew it was me.

" Andrea," I said, " I've got enough chow mein for two. You interested? "

She smiled and motioned me in quickly out of the rain. I hesitated. " I'm dripping wet," I said.

" Give me your things," she laughed. " I'll hang them in the bathroom to dry."

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While she took my wet things inside, I unlaced my sodden shoes and stepped out of them.

" Bring the chow mein in here," she called from the kitchen. I crossed the room, and on the couch Emily sombrely turned her head and looked at me with her baleful, yellow eyes.

We carried two plates of chow mein back to the living room.

" If you don't mind sitting on the floor," Andrea said, " we can use the coffee table under the window."

" I always eat better on the floor," I said.

She sat down, folding her legs lithely beneath her. I sat down across from her. The window was a square of grey light, and the rain cracked against the panes of glass.

I watched her as we ate. Now that she was visible in a better light, I saw that she was very lovely. The ribbon held her hair, but a single strand had come loose and hung down across her cheek. Even as I noticed, she raised her hand and swept the fallen lock back into place.

" This is wonderful," she said between swallows. " Much better than the hamburger I was going to fry."

Emily came slowly from the couch to sniff the plates. She rubbed her furry back in silent appeal against Andrea's leg.

" Do you think it would harm her? " Andrea asked.

" She may never drink milk again," I said, " but for ever after demand pekoe tea with cookies."

" I'll chance that." Andrea laughed and gave her what was left on her plate.

" I'm sorry about the other night," I said, " busting in here like I did, half-tight."

She smiled slightly and bent her head to conceal the smile. " You were so surprised," she said. " You came in here like a jolly bulldog and left like a remorseful Chihuahua."

" I was full of wine," I said ruefully.

She drew up her legs and clasped her arms around her knees. Her face changed under a pensive and solitary withdrawal.

" People are always much more sensitive about blindness than the blind," she said. " When you are blind you get used to it."

" How long has it been for you? " I asked.

" About twelve years now," she said. " I spent eight of those years in an institute for the blind. I came out four years ago and took some college work back home and then came to Chicago and started giving piano lessons to support myself."

" What do they teach you in an institute? "

She smiled pensively again, and her nose twitched in recollection as if she had bitten a sour plum. " You learn to find the end

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of a piece of meat with your fork and cut it off with your knife. You learn about social graces and adjustment to society. You learn to try never to fumble because any fumbling you do will make people pity you and remind them you are blind." She paused and grimaced. "But all that sounds very scientific and orderly. What it comes down to is that you learn what it is to be a donkey in a world of horses."

"The good things most people take for granted," I said, "must be the things you have to learn all over again."

"The beginning is the worst," she said, and she seemed to be listening to the sound of the rain against the glass. "It happened to me when I was ten years old after meningitis. Emily Dickinson wrote of dying, and years later when I read her poems I understood that is the way it is; as if a fly came with an uncertain, stumbling buzz between the light and you, and then the windows close, and then you cannot see." She shifted her body slightly on the floor. "Do you know Emily Dickinson's poems?"

"Some of them," I said.

"I have all of her poems in braille," she said. "They don't consider her too fashionable any more, but she does well for me." She stroked the cat, who raised her head and stared ominously at me. "Emily, here, is named after her." For a moment she did not speak. "Now what about you?" she said. "Have you been writing long?"

"Since the Korean War," I said. "I was going to do a great war novel, better than Shaw and Mailer, but it never worked out. I worked on a newspaper for a while and wrote stories at night. About four years ago I sold my first story and published my first novel about a year later. I've managed to make enough by writing to eat and pay the rent and get drunk every once in a while."

"On wine?" she asked.

"On wine," I said. "It's more genteel than scotch or gin."

"Don't you have a girl?" she asked.

"I was engaged to a girl right after the war," I said. "She broke it off because her parents felt I was indolent, lazy, and shiftless because I wouldn't take a steady job. She agreed with them, and they were all right."

"Where is she now?"

"Who knows? Married to another poor fool and making his life as happy as she would probably have made mine."

"You sound so old and weary," she said.

"In this gilded age," I said, "you don't have to grow old to

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feel weary. Even the young perch on their ash heaps and wait like Job for the next disaster." I paused to light a cigarette. "Where you from?" I asked.

"A little town in Kansas," she said. "My father was a chemist there and lives with my mother in the same frame house that I was born in."

The room had grown darker, and I could barely make out the white fabric of her blouse. The rain grew faint and left only the sound of water gurgling in the gutters.

"How did you happen to come here alone?" I said.

"I left home because whenever my mother kissed me I could feel the tears on her cheeks," she said. "And every time my father walked into my room I could sense his grief and despair. They loved me very much, but they were full of pity and wouldn't let me live. I write them that I am living with three other girls, gay and friendly girls, who take good care of me."

"You've got guts," I said.

"I'm not at all brave," she said with a trace of scorn for herself in her voice. "I'm not always cheerful either. I left home simply because I couldn't bear their pity. There was even a boy who took me to dances, and his nobility rose like wind from his pores, and everybody in town praised him for dating a poor, blind girl."

"You're a goodlooking girl," I said. "Maybe you weren't fair to him."

"There have been a few others like him," she said defiantly. "Men intent on a quick moment of pleasure and willing to concede that sometimes a woman has no need of sight. But I don't need that kind of love."

A silence settled between us. The room was completely dark by then. I felt a vague unrest and moved to rise.

"Let me turn on a light," she said. "You'll stumble and fall."

She rose and crossed the dark room swiftly and switched on a lamp. The light hurt my eyes for a moment. She stood there, slender in her slacks and blouse, her face a pale oval within the frame of her hair.

"Will you read me something you've written?" she asked.

"Sure," I said, "but don't expect Emily Dickinson."

She brought me my coat and hat, and we stood a moment by the door.

"You're tall," she said slowly. "You have a strong voice, a little weary sometimes, but with a good tone. What do you really look like?"

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"You'd never mistake me for a movie star," I said. "My face is what a pulp writer would call weather-beaten."

"I can imagine you any way I wish," she said. She smiled and extended her hands towards me. Her fingertips made a soft and subtle contact with my cheeks. I had never known that a woman's hands could be that gentle. They touched my temples and moved across my eyes and slipped down my cheeks. "Your eyes are set in deep hollows," she said, and there was a look of waiting and listening on her face. "I think your nose is too broad. Your upper lip is full, and you have a sharp cleft in your chin and you need a shave."

The touch of her fingers carried a pressing warmth through my body, and I felt an urgent longing to touch her. I bent and kissed her then, first on the forehead, lightly and with gentleness, and then with urgency, hard on her lovely lips. When I reached out to hold her, she pulled away.

"What do you want?" she asked, and a strange hardness had entered her voice. "What do you want?"

"Andrea," I said, "listen . . ."

"Do you love me already?" she said, and there was no mistaking her baleful mockery. "Is it desire you feel without love, or just pity for the poor little, blind music teacher?"

"I just wanted to kiss you," I said. "Emily Dickinson would have understood."

A shadow of remorse swept her face, and then she shook it off. "Thanks anyway for the chop suey."

"Chow mein," I said.

"All right," she said and relented slightly with a trace of a smile.

"Someday this week," I said, "I'll borrow a car and we'll go for a drive."

She was silent for a moment. "Maybe," she said finally. "We'll see."

I had never put credence in the myth that love might begin at first sight, by a look or by the touch of a hand. And I had always mocked those sonnets of passion that mediocre poets wrote in flame. But that winter, those days and nights of cold and snow, I woke in the morning without a sense of burden in the beginning of another day. For the first time in years I could endure the twilight becoming darkness without a wavering of my spirit.

Andrea and I took long walks together in the park. We sat closely together on a bench beneath the black trunk of a cold, bare tree. When she listened raptly to the scurrying of a squirrel, or ran her hands along the hard, frozen bark of a tree, or felt a

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change in the wind I could not hear, it was as if we were both young again, on an earth that still retained its magic. When I was with her it was strangely true that all things recaptured their edges, became sharp for me where they had been blurred.

"Andrea, do you believe in God?" I asked her one day in the park.

"Yes," she said quietly.

"Blindness has not made you bitter?"

"If I had not become blind," she answered softly, "I might have lived my years taking the earth for granted. My blindness has made me search again to discover all things anew. Is not God somewhere in this search?"

There were the evenings in her flat when I lay on the couch while she played a melancholy sonata or a gay song that echoed the wild whirling of figures in a lovers' dance. We ate and drank together, and the stain of wine glistened upon her lips, and it was true that she came upon the desert of my days as if she were a flower.

But there was always a wariness in the hours we spent together, an evident fear in her at what was growing between us. When I tried to kiss her she drew back in guarded restraint, so that I grew wary and apprehensive, too, and all that winter did not speak of the way I felt. Until one night, one night when I could not contain myself any longer, I broke the silence that held us apart.

She had moved from the bench of the piano and had come over to where I lay on the couch. She sat on the floor with her head near my knees, and the moon fell across her face, a white and glistening vision. I touched her hair, felt the fine strands tingle beneath my palms, and understood how aware she had made me of touch. The thought of having her as my wife suddenly possessed me with a wild sweetness such as I had never known.

"I love you, Andrea," I said.

She withdrew her head from near my knees. Her fingers which had been lying on the cloth near my hands flew back to her lap.

"There is an old folk legend," I said, "that speaks of a blind man joined with one who is lame. They journey together until they find the healing waters and are both restored."

"I don't want to talk of love," she said. She rose from the floor and went to stand beside the window.

"Are you going to spend the rest of your life alone?" I asked. "In this little flat, in these dark rooms, teaching piano to unhappy children?"

"I can look after myself," she said. "I don't need anyone to look after me."

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" We all need somebody," I said.

" I can look after myself," she said, and the words came ripped from her flesh. " I don't need pity."

She moved away from the window, away from me, into the darkness at the other end of the room. She sealed herself against me, retreated into silence that she wore as if it were armour. And I was left alone in the beam of the futile and bright moon that seemed to be hanging just above the roof of the building across the street.

I did not see Andrea for several weeks after that night. I wrote hard, harder than I had in years, and drank much more, and spent a good deal of time walking alone in the desolate park. I felt her everywhere, and yet pride and anger kept me from her door. In the afternoon, when the children played their scales in her flat, it filled me with a fierce melancholia. Sometimes walking past her flat at night I paused in the darkness and waited for a quick, furtive glimpse of her within the basement rooms.

The first traces of spring appeared in the city. Great winds swept the streets at night, and in the parks and gardens the earth stirred and waited. I listened to the wind shake the panes of my windows and knew Andrea must have been listening to the wild wind as well. In the morning the sun felt a shade warmer. Then, one day in early April, a sparrow perched on my sill and in the quick flutter of its jubilant step I knew the spring had come.

Near the end of April, one afternoon while leaving my flat to go for a beer, I passed a removals van parked outside in the street. As it pulled away I noticed an upright piano secured with rope and cloth. Under a sudden apprehension, I looked at Andrea's windows, and the shades were up and the curtains were gone. I went down the stairs and tried the door. When it opened I walked inside. I called her name, and there was no answer. The furniture was gone, and the rooms were empty. I turned in despair to leave, thinking of ways to pursue the van, when a small, furry body moved beside the stove in the kitchen and caught my eye. Emily came slowly over to look at me, and I knew that Andrea would be back.

I waited until twilight fell. The street lights went on and threw sharp beams of light through the uncurtained windows across the bare, wood floor. I found some milk in the fridge and poured a saucer for Emily, but she rejected my offering.

It must have been some time later when I heard the car outside. I looked out of the window and saw the taxi from which Andrea

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had emerged. A moment later she entered the flat. I made no sound, and yet she knew at once I was there.

"Pete," she said, and I couldn't understand whether there was sorrow or gladness in her voice.

"You were running away," I said bitterly. "You were going to leave and say nothing to me."

She made a helpless motion with her hands.

"Then go, damn you," I said. "I understand you now. When you say you don't want pity it is really pity that you want. You want to remain alone because then people will always pity you."

"You have no right," she said, and her voice was a thin, tight whisper, "no right to say that to me."

"Emily has more courage than you," I said savagely. "She at least goes prowling in the midnight alleys and comes back in the dawn with her fur ruffled and shreds of skin under her claws. But you are afraid of love."

She twisted her body as if to flee, and then something made her turn back, and the sight of her cold, white cheeks swept the anger from my body.

"When I found you my life was nothing," I said. "You taught me a new way of seeing a tree and a flower. A new way of understanding the earth and hearing the wind. You taught me that all life is connected by the touch of a hand. Don't take that from me now."

For a long moment she did not move. She seemed to be holding her breath. Then she walked slowly to where I stood and raised her face to mine and lifted her hands to my cheeks. Her breath came out in a long shaken sigh. She did not speak, but for the first time touched me in a fierce caress. She touched my eyes and touched my lips and her hands trembled with love. And for the first time since I was a child, I cried again for the great wonder and beauty of life.

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FLIGHT OF FANCY !

As he had been working late, and was feeling a bit dazed, Professor Pentagon ascended to his bedroom by the curious method of going up 4 steps and coming down 3.

He continued this erratic course until he reached the top of the stairs, when he calculated that he had mounted altogether 40 steps. How many steps were there in the flight?

For baffled readers, the answer is at the foot of page 167.

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TWO BY STARLIGHT

By starlight and by candlelight and dreamlight
She comes to me.

HERBERT TRENCH

Caught Out

He lay back on the cool grass, clasping his hands behind his neck. "I'd forgotten what it was like to be clean," he said raptly; "I have a new body." He stretched languorously, focusing his eyes with an effort on the arabesque of branches and stars above his head.

The girl splashed and vanished in a fan of spray to reappear just a moment later, laughing and wringing the water from her hair.

"Marietjie," he said. There was a thickness in his throat. "Will you never come, beloved?"

"When I've finished."

She stood motionless, her face tilted to the sky. "Have you ever known such peace?"

Something plopped loudly in the stillness.

"There's a frog in the water," he observed with satisfaction.

"No."

"Yes—I heard it. A bullfrog with a slimy green back . . . and claws like small human hand . . . "

"Catch the soap," she said hastily.

ROBIN COLLINS, *The Four Coloured Flag*

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Starry-eyed

" Theseus? "

" You ought to be asleep, Lalage."

" Asleep! This is our last night but one on earth . . . Every moment," she was saying, " is as precious as gold. We ought to be doing—"

" Doing what, in the name of goodness? What CAN one do in mid-ocean in the dark? "

" You ought to know . . . Look at that star, Theseus."

" What for? "

" Such a lovely big star . . . It takes two to see a star properly."

ELEANOR FARJEON, *Ariadne and the Bull*

Changing Down

" Yes," I answered you last night;
" No," this morning, sir, I say.
Colours seen by candlelight
Will not look the same by day.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING,
The Lady's Yes

Boccaccio's Dream

Scarcely had I closed my eyes, if indeed time can be reckoned any more in sleep than in heaven, when my Fiammetta seemed to have led me into the meadow . . . I sprang to embrace her.

" Do not spill the water! Ah! You have spilt a part of it."

I then observed in her hand a crystal vase. A few drops were sparkling on the sides and running down the rim; a few were trickling from the base and from the hand that held it.

" I must go down to the brook," said she, " and fill it again as it was filled before." When she returned, she was close to me at once: she smiled: her smile pierced me to the bones: it seemed an angel's. She sprinkled the pure water on me; she looked most fondly; she took my hand; she suffered me to press hers to my bosom, but, whether by design I cannot tell, she let fall a few drops of the chilly element between . . .

" Take it! " said that soft voice. " O now most dear Giovanni! I know thou hast strength enough; and there is but little—at the bottom lies our first kiss."

" Mine! didst thou say, beloved one? is that left thee still? "

" MINE! " said she, pensively; and as she abased her head, the broad leaf of the lily hid her brow and her eyes.

W. S. LANDOR, *The Pentameron*

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Censored!

Tell them, when you are home again,
How warm the air was now;
How silent were the birds and leaves,
And of the moon's full glow;
And how we saw afar
A falling star:
It was a tear of pure delight
Ran down the face of Heaven this happy night . . .
And now my heart's delight,
Goodnight, goodnight;
Give me the last sweet kiss—
But do not breathe at home one word of this!

W. H. DAVIES, *Love's Caution*

What Next?

I was suddenly awake again. Had I been dreaming? The moonlight still streamed into the room: the pattern on the carpet and the chimney-piece was unchanged. But what was that scratching sound, that half heard scuffling noise . . . I reached for my matches and lit the candle.

"You don't sound very thrilled to see me," said Matilda.

"I was hardly expecting you. One doesn't often have young girls coming down the chimney into one's bedroom."

"Doesn't one?" she said innocently. "I wouldn't know."

Standing in the far corner of the room, with the candlelight indistinctly illuminating her slim shoulders, her dark hair, and her deep-set eyes, she had an elfin, waif-like air . . .

"What happens now?" she asked.

I looked straight into her dark, deep, terribly solemn and romantic eyes. "That," I said, "is quite a weighty problem."

"Would it help you to solve it," she said, "if I got into bed with you?"

JOHN HADFIELD, *Love on a Branch Line*

Pipped at the Bedpost

I had a dream: Upon a stair
I met a maid who kissed my lips;
A nightie was her only wear,
We almost came to loving grips.
And then she opened wide a door,
And pointed to a bonny bed . . .
Oh blast! I wakened up before
I could discover—were we wed?

ROBERT SERVICE, *Dreams*

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One of the new arrivals was a con man

the COLLECTOR

by O. E. Middleton

MOTHER-LOVER !" said Ernie Patchett, as he saw them bringing Tiny in.

" What did you say, man? " Danton called out anxiously from the next block. He could sense the surprise and curiosity in Patchett's voice.

" I can't talk to you any more, man. We got a new guest. A real small stud. So long," said Patchett, and he walked away from the bars and down the range to the table outside his cell.

When he had spread out his bedroll, the little man came out of his cell, looked up and down the range, then shambled over to where Patchett was sitting.

" Kinda warm in here," he said in a hayseed voice.

" Well, man, it's this way," said Patchett, grinning and offering his packet of fags. " That old Sheriff, he wants to make mighty sure all us fellers doesn't catch cold or contract pneumonia. Otherwise we might not get to that old courthouse. So rain, hail or shine outside, we always got it warm in here."

" I guess it's kind of bothersome at first though," said the little man, and he ran his short finger around the inside of the neck of his new flannel jail shirt and twisted his head from side to side.

" Man you soon get used to it," said Ernie easily. " This your first time busted?"

Up and down the range, the rest of us were lounging about. Pretending to talk, play solitaire, sleep. But we were all listening.

Tiny dragged on his cigarette and screwed up his face. The range was quiet. " You mean is it my first time in a jam? "

Ernie nodded. But he didn't need to hear the answer, nor did anyone else, to know that it was Tiny's first time in.

" How about you? " the little man asked.

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" Hell, man," said Patchett, " I been in and out like a rabbit in a hole, seems to me," and he grinned and called up the range to another negro, younger and thinner, who was propped against his cell door: " Ain't that right Henry? "

And Henry opened his mouth and said in his clear singer's voice, " That's right, man! "

And then Tiny asked, " What they got you in here for? " and there was a shocked stopping of talk among the others and an exchange of meaningful looks.

But Patchett smoothed it over without the newcomer's even noticing and said with his usual grin, " Parole violation." Only the way he said it made it sound like an honourable profession.

He lowered his voice after that, and went on talking quietly to Tiny, telling him the things he needed to know to survive and keep out of trouble with the screws.

It was three days before any kind of news leaked out about the nature of the crime for which Tiny was being held, but in the meanwhile there was plenty of guessing. Everyone thought Tiny was " not a bad little guy," but it was generally agreed that there was something odd about him . . .

He didn't seem to be the kind to be picked up for larceny or car-conversion or anything violent. Someone suggested that he might have been pimping, but the youngest white boy, young Slim, shook his head and swore he could smell a competitor a mile off.

Rankin, the sour-faced army deserter, offered everyone even money right from the start that he was a sodomist, and as it turned out later, his guess was the nearest.

Henry brought in the news one morning when he had been for a haircut in another wing.

" He's a sexo, sure enough," he whispered to Rankin, and quickly the news went from cell to cell that Tiny's crime was not a nice one ; that it involved a girl, a little girl ; and that there were witnesses.

But after the first curiosity no one talked much about it. No one said, " Do you think he did it or not?" Only sour-faced Rankin made occasional sly remarks which told everybody except Tiny what he thought about the case.

Patchett was the one who eased the little man through the painful days of the preliminary hearing. They would sit facing each other across the small steel table during the wait between morning chow and the hour when the first men were taken across the street to the court, and Ernie would teach him court-room manners and

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the little things he needed to know to make a good impression.

" Mind you always say ' Sir ' to that old judge, even if he is an old son-of-a-bitch. And sit up there nice and straight and look him right in the eye when he talk to you! "

And Tiny would nod and ask naive questions in his child's voice and spill tobacco when he tried to roll a cigarette. On court days his face always had a crumpled, dumb look as though he couldn't quite understand what was happening.

But somehow, at the last moment when the screw came and pulled the switch and the range doors clanged open, Ernie Patchett would say something to make everyone laugh and Tiny's face would pucker up in a grin as he went out to face the music.

There were usually about ten in the cell block. Of the whites, Rankin stood to get five years for desertion and car-conversion; young Slim was due for one to three years, and an old hobo, booked for vagrancy, was expecting thirty days. Of the negroes who were there at that time, Henry was likely to get from one to five years for larceny; Joe, a youngster from Mississippi, reckoned on thirty days for vagrancy; a well-spoken young man called Barker was fighting a wife-maintenance order. And Patchett ?

Patchett who could sing you a spiritual after lights-out fit to make you cry ; Patchett who could open his mouth wide and laugh so it was good to see and hear and be near; Patchett stood to get twenty years.

After the lower court hearing, Tiny's case was passed on to the Supreme Court and he began to steady down like everyone else and wait.

Joe and the old hobo went off the same day to another place to serve their thirty days ; Barker's wife eased up on him and he was released, to the delight of the whole cell block. Even the screws smiled the day Barker walked out.

He had on a clean white shirt and someone had shined his shoes for him and Big Steve, the good-natured screw, brought down his suit from the baggage room. He looked like a coloured college professor or lawyer as he shook hands gravely with everyone and walked out, and long after he was gone, Ernie Patchett stood propped against the bars at the end of the range conversing with Danton in the next cell block.

" We just lose a real nice guest, man."

" You don't say," echoed Danton's voice.

" Yes, man, there's another stud gone out into the free world."

" That Barker was a real nice stud! "

" Man, he didn't harm anybody."

That same afternoon, Tiny's tooth began to ache while he was

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playing a game of Dirty Hearts with Rankin and two transients who had come in the day before.

"Ooh!" he said. "Take my hand, will you Ernie?" and he went and lay down on his cot. By chow time it was no better and at lights-out he called to Big Steve as he locked up the cells for the night.

"Oooh Steve, can't you give me something to take away the pain?"

Big Steve was one of those great bellied men with no neck, a round red face and tiny feet. His weight seemed to give him speed; while he was good-natured, nobody took advantage of him.

But he seemed to make an exception of Tiny and the little man would call him names and taunt the big man in his child's voice in a way which would have earned any ordinary man a spell in the hole.

"Go on, you big slob," he would pipe through the bars as Big Steve came to shut us in our cells for the night from the master switch outside number one. "Go and lock up the others and give us a late night for a change!" or "When you going to take us out for a walk in the sunshine, you mean old man?"

And Steve would grin and show his broken pug's teeth and say mildly, "Pipe down, you little runt. You ain't going no place. You can stay in there, nice and quiet, and I'll see if I can get you some new magazines."

And back he would come, maybe, with a pile of them.

Big Steve came down the outside of the bars and stood opposite Tiny's cell and asked him what was wrong.

"Ooooh! It's my tooth!" said Tiny, and he declared he wouldn't be able to go to sleep without something to take away the pain.

"Go on, give the little punk something or we won't get any sleep either," Rankin growled.

Big Steve said he would see what he could do when he had finished his rounds.

In about an hour he came back and pulled the switch so Tiny could come out of his cell and get some pills.

The next morning the tooth seemed better.

A man who might have been a schoolteacher or commercial traveller was brought in soon after breakfast. His name was Louie and he was a heroin addict. He did not want to talk to anyone but sat hunched up on his bed smoking one cigarette after another. A couple of times he lay down, but each time he had nightmares and Rankin went and quietened him.

"Say, Mac, us guys would like it if you would quieten down a

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little," Rankin said in his most polite way. He was polite only to people he was going to rob or of whom he was afraid.

" Aw, shut up !" screeched Louie. " How do you know how I feel ? I tell you I feel terrible. I'm dying . . . Call the doctor ! Oooh ! Doctor !"

Over a game of checkers Tiny was telling Patchett how he was brought up by foster-parents who were farmers.

" But after I passed the age of twenty-one, I came into town," he said. " When I laid me down to sleep at nights I kept seeing a big blonde girl with nice eyes and a kind voice. I knew I would have to come to the city to find her."

" Sure," said Ernie easily. " I know how it is. Ain't no use looking for one like that out in the cottonwoods."

" But in the city all the girls were very tall. I searched all over, but I didn't see *my* girl," Tiny went on. " Once in a while, a girl in the diner where I worked took a shine to me and let me take her out if I was very nice to her. But I didn't seem to catch up with mine ; the one I used to see in the dream at home on the farm." Then he shut up as though he had just remembered something not very nice and Ernie, being a very understanding person, says, " Just listen to that poor Louie holler, man. You think he really going to die ? "

In the short spell between supper and lights-out, Tiny's jaw began to throb again, and when Big Steve came down to close up for the night, Tiny asked him for something to take away the pain.

Steve took the elevator up to the dispensary to get the pills and the cell block was quiet until Louie woke squealing he was dying.

" Doctor ! Ooh ! Doctor !" he shouted. " Isn't there a doctor in this damned place ?" and he kept it up until the young doctor came down and gave him a shot of paraldehyde, which made him vomit but settled his nerves.

The stench of the paraldehyde filled the cell block, but as soon as Louie's moaning died down, everyone went back to his dream.

Rankin's was a Russian girl he had met in Paris during the war. She was young and debauched, with masses of thick black hair and an upstairs room off the boulevard Clichy. Sometimes the dream would slip out of focus if he had been worrying too much about his case, and he would see his young daughter with his army hat in her hand, standing at their front door and gazing down the street as though waiting for someone.

Ernie's was his wife. A supple, sensual woman in her mid-twenties with a skin like velvet whom he had married after his first stretch. She was intelligent too, and their love-making was

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deliberate, drawn-out and preceded by elaborate preparations. But sometimes it took him back to the Federal Penitentiary . . . to the girl-boy of whom he had grown so fond that he had wept when the time came to be paroled.

Tiny's dream was big and plump and fair. He called her Zelda, and while he was with her, he was safe and happy. Even his tooth didn't hurt any more.

It was about here that Rankin's trial began, and the strain of it, day after day, for a week, didn't improve his temper. He knew he didn't stand a chance. There were too many witnesses for the prosecution. Rankin had been an orphan. He was brought up by grandparents from whom he soon learnt that he could steal without being found out. A long spell in Borstal during his teens gave him a sound apprenticeship in the more skilled branches of petty crime, and only the war seemed to have saved him from a long term in jail. He was an unlovely, unlikeable man, taller than average and with a long grey face with seamed cheeks.

One day, he met one of Tiny's acquaintances in the cells under the courthouse. This man was a waiter in the diner where Tiny used to work and was in trouble for beating his wife. He asked Rankin how it felt to be locked up with a baby stealer and told him there were two witnesses to what Tiny was supposed to have done.

That night at chow time, Rankin called along to Tiny, "A guy at the court tells me the prosecution's got two witnesses to what you did."

We are feeding on sauerkraut, which is made by the prisoners at the Sturmville State Penitentiary. There is a thin strip of stale bacon with it and a hunk of dry white bread.

Tiny's face began to pucker up as though he was going to cry into his pannikin. "Nobody saw me doing anything," he said. "I wasn't doing anything . . . I haven't been able to do anything for a long time."

"Ain't none of our damned affair anyway, man," said Ernie evenly from the next table, and he turned around to face Rankin. "Cain't none of us in here say what he done. That for the judge and jury man." Then he went on talking to Rankin about his own case, asking how the trial was shaping and what he thought his chances were of a suspended sentence on the larceny charge.

Tiny's face began to swell up where the abscess was forming on his jaw. Big Steve brought him tablets every night now to stop the pain. As the day of his trial drew nearer, he rolled more cigarettes from his sack of chopped tobacco and occasionally there

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was a thin dribble of saliva down his chin. He spent hours sitting or lying on his bunk, worrying about his case. We all did it. Even Ernie. But with him it was hard to notice.

He was maybe lying on his bunk, his eyes fixed on the dull green ceiling. He might have been singing, *Take My Hand, Precious Lord . . . Lead me on, through the night . . . though my soul is growing weak, lead me on* . . . or perhaps it was *Silent Night*. He was not a religious man. He was too easy and natural, too much of a fine healthy animal to be one of those. But these songs said something for him. They were sad songs. Beautiful and sad, and with his resonant bass voice he could get right inside them, fill them out to the dimensions, the tragic dimensions, of his own life.

Everyone liked to hear Ernie sing. Usually Henry's light tenor voice would come in on the side and it was wonderful, especially after shut-up time, when you were trying to gather yourself together for the journey into the night.

But with Ernie you knew that while all of him seemed to be given up to the song, his thoughts were working away at the letter he was planning to send the judge before his trial began.

Tiny could not write properly. Only his name and a few simple words. So when he wanted anything from the screws or from the baggage room where all personal belongings were kept, he asked Ernie, or Young Slim to write the note for him. He never received any letters and never had any visitors except his lawyer. Yet this did not sour him, or make him mean or miserly. He would share his pouch of tobacco with any man who needed a smoke and if he somehow managed to keep a hoard of bread scraps on the steel shelf beside his toilet paper in his cell, it was not simply for himself. Anyone who was hungry was welcome.

But Tiny was happiest when he was in the middle of a game of Dirty Hearts or Euchre. He loved the noise and talk ; the thrill of playing the right card at just the right moment, and, above all, the joy of cheating without being found out.

One of the new arrivals was a con man, a married man of about thirty who had managed to deprive his employers of about fifteen thousand dollars without their being able to trace it. He was well-spoken and friendly, and in between going out into the visitors' room for long consultations with his lawyer, he partnered Tiny at cards. Ernie and Henry, or maybe Ernie and one of the new arrivals, would play opposite. The way the tables and stools were made, only two players could sit at a time. These perched on the backs of the stools which, like the tables were welded to the bars, while the others stood. Sometimes we

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brought out blankets from the cells and all sat round on the floor to play. Except for chow-times or shake-downs or parades to the barber, the screws usually left us alone in the daytime. You would see most of the boys playing checkers or cards, talking quietly, or maybe promenading, two or three abreast up and down the range.

Once in a while, when he was sure there were no screws close by, Ernie would lean against the bars at the end of the range and have one of his long conversations with Danton in the next cell block.

"You there, man? This is Ernie Patchett calling Joe Danton. You there, man?"

And through two thicknesses of bars, from around the corner in the next cell block would come Danton's voice; easy, indolent, alert but infinitely patient, drawling, musical—the voice of a negro.

"Yes, man. This Danton here. What you want, man?"

It would have been hard to find anyone more fundamentally innocent and child-like than Tiny. But we all knew that some newspapers and the churches, the old judge and the hypocritical jurymen would harden their hearts and minds against him when they heard the nature of his crime. When they saw his gnome-like body in the dock and his child's face lifted to his accusers, the public would cry out for vengeance.

He didn't stand a chance. That was why he never lacked a partner for Dirty Hearts or Euchre; why we asked him continually about his toothache; and why one or the other of us called out to Big Steve or one of the other screws when he came to lock us in for the night, "Say how about a pill for Tiny's toothache, man? That old tooth of his is real bad tonight."

And the tooth *was* sore. The bulge on his jaw where the abscess had formed seemed to twist his face out of shape. There was a permanent flush on that side and he ate only the sloppiest parts of his food. Only the pain-killing pills seemed to be keeping him going.

But in the week before his trial, even these seemed to fail him and he lined up for corn-mush every morning with eyes puffy from lack of sleep.

One day, in answer to a note Patchett wrote on Tiny's behalf, the doctor came down and had a look at the tooth. It would have to come out, he said. And that meant a trip outside to the dental clinic of the city hospital.

It was all arranged for the Friday. Tiny would go out, under

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guard, in a police ambulance in the morning, and by Monday when he was to appear in court, the swelling and pain would all have gone . . .

It was Friday morning. Corn-mush as usual : a slice of dry bread and weak coffee without sugar. The clash and clatter of spoons in pannikins as we passed our utensils back through the serving grille. The squeals of the rubber tyres of the trolley as it glided down the corridor to the elevator.

Patchett was leaning back against the bars at the end of the range. The way he was facing, it would take a wise screw to know he was talking to Danton in the next cell block. His voice was pitched just right, so that it rebounded from the hard walls and reached the ears of the negro he couldn't see, without being heard by the whole jail. Up and down the range, the other prisoners were trying to appease with tobacco the hunger which breakfast had not satisfied.

Someone was mopping the floor: slopping the sodden mop from side to side of the narrow promenade area, so that the hard surface shone with a film of water and the smell of the harsh disinfectant—the smell of all the institutions in the world—filled our mouths and nostrils. In his cell, Tiny was tidying up, ready to go to the dentist.

In a little while Big Steve marched down the corridor and pulled the switch to open the double doors and let Tiny out. " Good luck, man! " shouted Patchett and several voices called, " Good luck! " or " Take it easy! " just to give him a send-off.

The next half hour was peaceful enough with the usual talk about cases, the beginning of card games, speculation as to what would be given to us for midday chow. One of the boys on a vagrancy charge was taken across the road to the court.

But about nine o'clock, without any warning, there was a shake-down.

Big Steve, two other guards, and the Sheriff himself, let themselves into the cell block. They took away all our little playthings. All the nails, bits of string, scraps of wire, fragments of razor-blades with which we split our matches in halves, divided our cigarettes or did the numerous small repairs for which the authorities made no provision. It was very vexing and we all suffered in some way. One had lost some dried-up scraps of bread ; another a broken piece of pencil; yet another, the remains of a reefer he had brought in with him from the free world. We were curious to know the cause of this inconvenience, because all things have causes, especially in jail, and usually a shake-down was preceded by some hint of warning, some saving word from a

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screw or trusted prisoner which allowed treasures to be more securely hidden.

Big Steve brought us the news an hour later. The noise of his angry voice burst out of the elevator and we saw him hustling Tiny along the corridor, calling him all the nasty names he could lay his tongue to.

"Mother-lover!" said Patchett. "What little Tiny done?"

"You dirty little two-timer you," Steve was saying. "You ungrateful baby-faced runt you," and he let Tiny in and made him go into his cell and be locked in there too. Then he glared through the bars at us and poured out the story.

"You know how I was always getting pills for this little son-of-a-bitch to ease his toothache? Well, instead of swallowing them for his toothache, the little runt is hiding them like he maybe wants them for the big sleep one day. When he goes out this morning, he is searched by the Sheriff and they find thirty-six sleeping pills on him! And when they ask him how he comes by them, he says, 'Big Steve gave them to me.'" He mimicked Tiny's voice and glared through the bars into his cell.

"Thirty-six pills!" he shouted. "Enough to kill two full-size men, never mind one pint-sized son-of-a-bitch like that!"

We had to agree with Big Steve, even if he was a screw. What happened later at the trial, surprised none of us. The thing which stuck in our minds was the way Tiny had stacked up those little bits of powder, one by one, through nights of pain.

Patchett seemed to voice all our thoughts that day when he passed on the news to his friend, "You there, Danton?"

"Yes, man!"

"You know what our friend Tiny gone and done?"

"No, man. What he done?"

"Man, that stud save up thirty-six of those little old pills the screw got him for his toothache. Instead of swallowing those pills like he should, old Tiny cached them away."

"Well done!" crowed Danton.

"Comes time for him to get his tooth pulled this morning and the Sheriff find them when they frisk him in the bureau."

"Oh, man! That old Tiny in for a bad time."

"Yes sir! He all locked up here in his crib."

"Man, how many pills you say that stud colleck?"

"Thirty-six, man," said Patchett slowly, rocking his head.

"Uh-huh. *Thirty-six.* Wow, that enough for the big sleep, man!"

"Yes sir. That old Tiny is a real collector."

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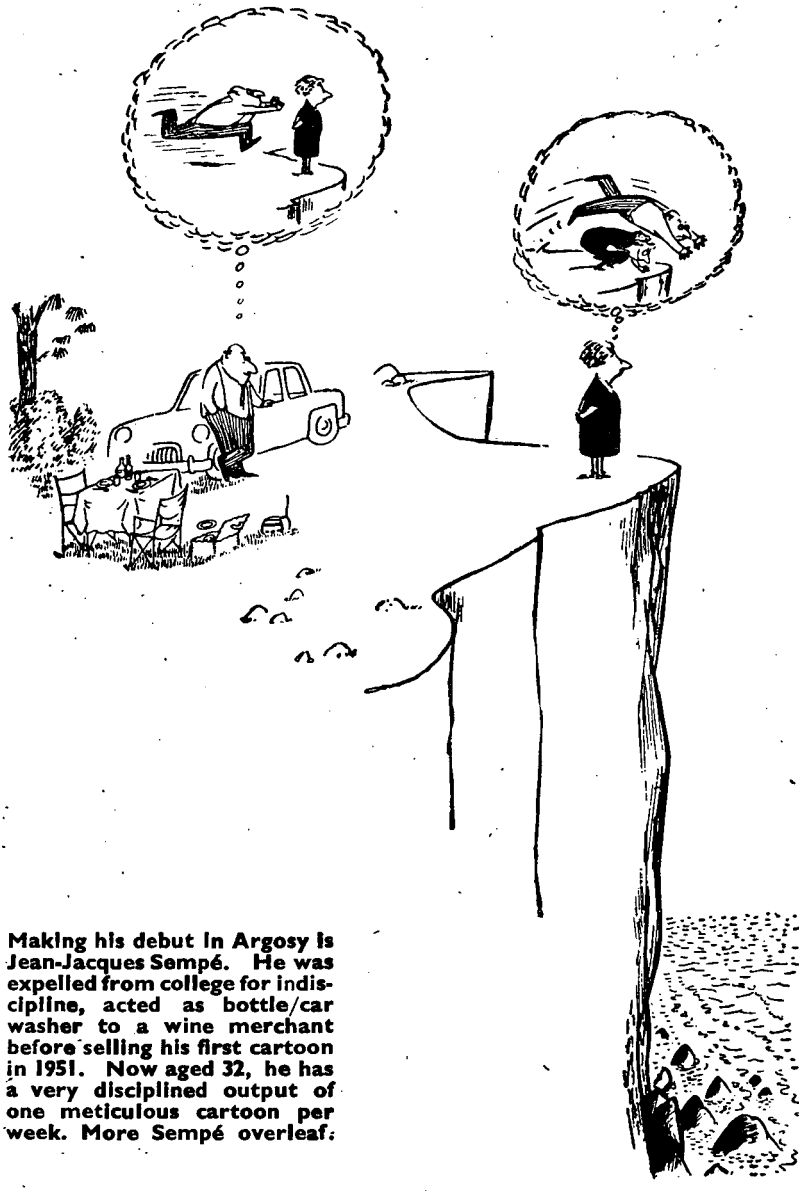
INTRODUCING . . . SEMPÉ



Making his debut in Argosy is Jean-Jacques Sempé. He was expelled from college for indiscipline, acted as bottle/car washer to a wine merchant before selling his first cartoon in 1951. Now aged 32, he has a very disciplined output of one meticulous cartoon per week. More Sempé overleaf.

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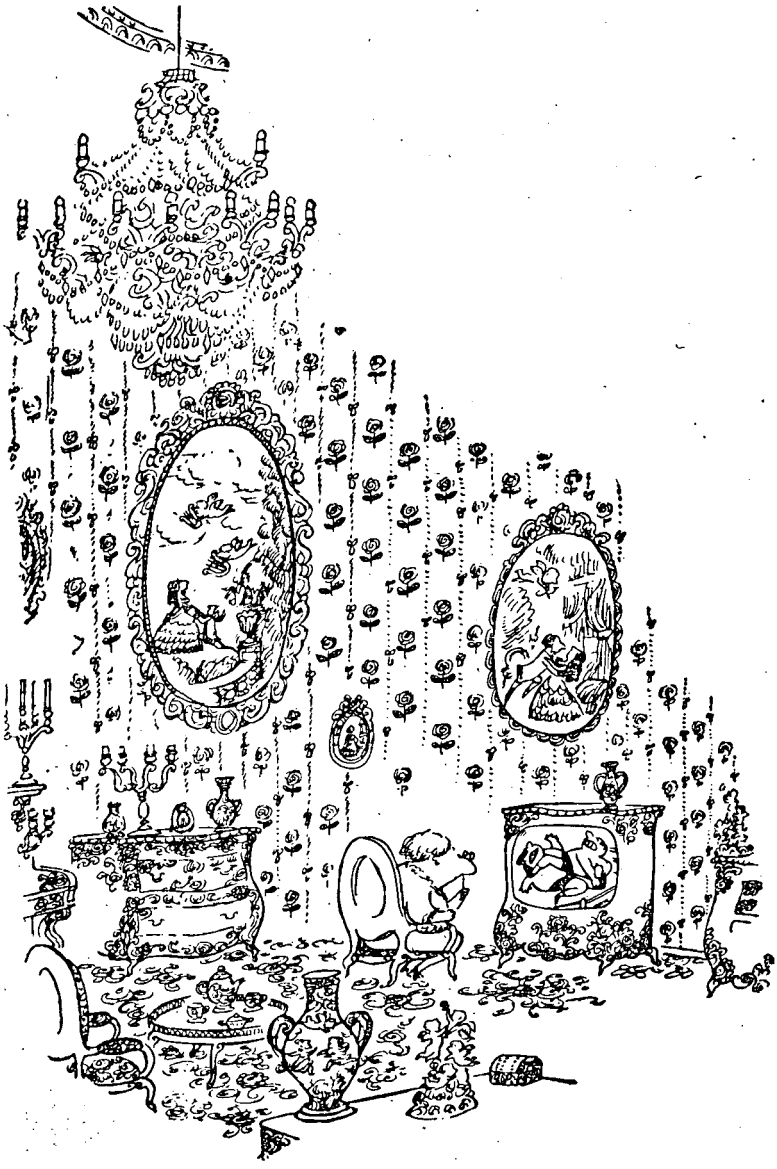
THE LAUGHTER SPOT . . .



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. . . WITH A FRENCH ACCENT

NEXT MONTH: Don't miss
RONALD SEARLE'S PARIS NOTEBOOK

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Are you ever in a rut and want to fly away?

WINGS OF SONG

by L. P. Davies

IN faded middle age Miss Agatha Bentley, small, intensely active and possessed of great strength of character, still retained much of the pink and white and gold colouring of her youth. Her appearance had once been compared—by a similarly aged but less well preserved fellow lecturer—to a well-handled Dresden china shepherdess.

She had taken the milestone of thirty-five in her brisk stride. If she had remembered the anniversary, and in a life so full as hers the only dates to remember were those of coming Women's Institute meetings and lecture tours, she would not have been dismayed by the occasion. Bodily age, she would have said firmly, is of little importance.

She would further have added that she had no regrets for the way she had spent those thirty-five years. She had done things and been places. That she had never married was also a matter for no regret. She had also had her moments. Not the least of those being a certain proposal from a shining-skinned witch-doctor's son who had lived in a reed hut in one of the more remote parts of Darkest Africa and who had been much taken with Miss Bentley's singing, she being the possessor of a clear but regrettably off-key contralto voice.

She had rejected the proposal to settle down in a neighbouring hut in order that the embryo witch-doctor might continue to be beguiled by her singing, but in the gentlest way possible, explaining that duty called and that she had to return to England to tell the people there all about the M'Lukus of M'Lukuland. She had felt genuine regret at having to refuse the offer, a regret perhaps only matched by the later occasion when she had tried to make a career of her singing in the civilised world and had failed dismally.

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If she had elected to remain in Africa her life would have been vastly different. Certainly, she would not have found herself waking to a bright spring morning some ten years later to discover an odd feeling of discomfort in the general proximity of her shoulder-blades. A sensation, she decided, that must undoubtedly owe its origin to the previous day's four hours in an obsolete, hard-backed railway compartment.

Her questing fingers discovered new and strange contours. An over-the-shoulder inspection in front of the mirror caused her to frown at the ridging of milky flesh. Once, while wearing a briefish bathing-costume, she had fallen asleep in a diamond-wickered chair. The flesh patterning then had something in common with the dual ridges now. So not the railway compartment after all. Clearly the cottage-kitchen-type chair she had suffered on the lecture platform at the Little Pottam Women's Institute.

Satisfied with her diagnosis, Miss Bentley put the matter from her mind and moved with her usual brisk efficiency into the daily routine, breaking into discordant song from time to time, opening her mail and subsequently writing to accept an invitation to deliver her " With the M'Lukus in Central Africa " lecture (illustrated with lantern slides) to the Rowley Young Conservatives.

But as the day wore on the vague discomfort became a positive irritation that refused to be ignored. Once, during the afternoon, she found herself rubbing her shoulders, bovine fashion, against the jamb of a handy door. Before retiring for the night she soaked herself in a hot mustard bath.

The discomfort was still there the following morning and, posturing before the mirror, she was forced to the conclusion that the protuberances were certainly more pronounced. Even when wearing a loose-fitting cardigan and holding herself with chin tucked well in, the mirror conveyed an almost alarming impression of near deformity.

One of Miss Bentley's unassuming boasts was that, apart from one isolated occasion, she had never had a day's illness in her life. Her telephone pad was devoid of professional numbers. She selected a name from the directory, her choice inspired by the convenience of the surgery address rather than the string of qualifications that trailed Dr. Howard Roderick's name like the tail of a kite.

At forty, Dr. Roderick, having no wife to fill the spaces between surgeries, filled them instead by keeping abreast of medical developments and by attending concerts. He took great pride in

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both his imaginative approach to a diagnosis and his cultivated ear for music.

Miss Bentley undressed behind a screen and emerged, modestly clutching discarded clothing to her still maidenly and unwithered breast, to present her back for examination. Dr. Roderick, impressed at first glance by her fragile beauty, was even more impressed by the delicate lines of her upper torso. Certain unprofessional emotions surged through his body.

" And you say you first noticed them yesterday? " he asked, regarding the shoulder ridges with practised eyes.

" Yesterday morning," she confirmed.

The twin protuberances were something new. "And in yourself, you feel well enough? " he asked, mainly to give himself time in which to think.

" I have never," Miss Bentley told him in the tone she reserved for the declaration, " had a day's sickness in my life."

"Apart—" she qualified hastily, for after all this was a doctor's surgery, and so akin to the confessional — "from a mild attack of fever, the result of a snake bite. But that was ten years ago and in Africa."

"Africa—" echoed Dr. Roderick with false heartiness, welcoming the diversion. " How very interesting. You were on holiday there? "

" I was fortunate enough to be attached as an anthropologist to Dr. Toomey's expedition, studying the manners and customs of the M'Lukus of M'Lukuland."

" You don't mean Tuke Toomey ? The Borneo chap? "

"As I recall, certain of his associates did refer to him in that fashion. And he did, at one time, investigate the Borneo interior."

Respect came to jostle the admiration in Dr. Roderick's bemused eyes. " How very interesting! " he exclaimed, now with genuine enthusiasm. " Dr. Toomey is a very big name in the world of medicine. You must know him very well."

Miss Bentley wriggled her shoulders. A draught was causing the added affliction of goose-pimples.

"At one time," she replied, " very well. Now we merely exchange greetings at the appropriate festivals."

The wriggle brought the doctor's wandering attention back to the matter in hand. He plumped for one of his imaginative snap diagnoses.

" The growths are of fibrous origin, purely temporary and certainly not malignant. But we will have them X-rayed, just to be on the safe side . . . Thank you, Miss Bentley. You may get dressed again."

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Mention of Africa and the M'Lukus had brought the past vividly and nostalgically alive. Reclothing behind the screen, Miss Bentley was transported to a liana-festooned clearing alongside a muddy, slow-moving river. Seated on a recently killed crocodile she was singing to M'Bolaka his favourite song; the only song, now she came to remember, that he had ever seemed to want to listen to. How did it go? She hummed a few nostalgic bars . . . darling M'Bolaka . . . so clever in his own primitive way. And still with a while to go before he came of age and sat for his witch-doctor's finals. But that, of course, had been ten years ago. Perhaps by now he was qualified. He had called her, she also recalled, M'Walinaka Bwana—his Little White Singing Bird . . .

Buttoning her cardigan, Miss Bentley came from behind the screen. Dr. Roderick, a pained expression on his face, was staring at her through glazed eyes. It was then she realised she was singing M'Bolaka's song at the top of her voice. Flushing just a little she broke off in mid-phrase. It was patently obvious that her listener was not as appreciative of her talents as had been M'Bolaka. Collecting her handbag she departed in a somewhat frigid silence. It was some time before Dr. Roderick recovered from the shock of the incompatibility of fragile features and strident voice.

The X-rays were taken two days later at the local hospital. By that time the twin protuberances were so pronounced as to give Miss Bentley the hump-backed appearance of a Notre Dame gargoyle. The efficient rubber-aproned young lady who conducted the X-ray raised puzzled brows but made no comment, other than stating that the results would be in the doctor's hands the following day. Dr. Roderick confirmed this by telephone the next morning, making an appointment for the same afternoon. Miss Bentley, inspecting the ridges, now a foot in length and some six inches across at the apex of each curve, realised that attempting to disguise them with loose-fitting smocks had now become impossible. She came to the reluctant conclusion that she would have to cancel all her forthcoming M'Luku lectures.

" The plates," Dr. Roderick informed her in due course, " tend to confirm my diagnosis. In my opinion the growths are the outcome of some kind of glandular imbalance. We will, of course, only consider surgery—" his patient failed to suppress a shudder —"as a last resort. Will you please come closer to the light." He explored the ridges. " They have certainly become larger—"

And they reminded him of something. Over the head of his bed, as a child, had hung a brightly-coloured lithograph of angels, hovering. Wings—? Oh, lord . . . But embryo tails weren't all

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that uncommon. So why not, indeed, wings? On the other hand man had descended from tailed animals. He had swung from branches, not flown up into them. So atavism was out. So were obscure psychological factors involved? Mind over matter?

"Tell me," said Dr. Roderick, straightening, "do you ever have occasion to feel cribbed and confined? Do you ever have the feeling that you have got into a rut and you would like to spread wings and fly away?"

"Pardon?" said Miss Bentley somewhat frostily, turning clear blue eyes over a shoulder that was still shapely in parts.

He floundered beneath her gaze. He had let his imagination run riot and he had spoken without first considering. And for a doctor, that was unforgivable.

"I would like," he said carefully, "to make a more thorough examination." He glanced at his watch. "I'm afraid it will have to be tomorrow. Shall we say three o'clock?"

It was an appointment that Miss Bentley failed to keep. During the night the first snow-drift of downy white feathers made an appearance. Inspecting herself in front of the mirror, now the first anxious duty of each new day, she thought at first that the coatings of white fluff that covered the protuberances like frost on a cake, must somehow have been caused by adhesions from her white flannelette nightgown. A brisk scrubbing with the dry bath-brush told her the down was a fixture. It was at that point she came to realise she was, in fact, in the process of sprouting wings.

When the shock had dulled a little, she saw what the doctor had been driving at with his talk of spreading wings and flying the cot. But she lived a perfectly contented life with no yearnings to escape from ruts. There had been those times, certainly, when she had thought how pleasant it would be to return to Africa and sing to M'Bolaka again. But that was as far as it went. Miss Bentley felt sure that she could never have subconsciously wished herself a pair of wings so that she could flap her southward way across the oceans like a migratory starling. All she need have done, if she had so wished, was book herself a first-class cabin on the next boat leaving for Africa. Which, she told herself, is precisely what she would have done if ever she had felt the urge. So obviously she had never felt a strong enough urge. So why wings? She had a sudden vision of herself, flapping a stately swan-like way above the clouds, watched by a row of open-mouthed faces at the windows of a passing airliner.

Miss Bentley shuddered at the evoked picture, absently flexed certain shoulder muscles, and discovered from the mirror that she had inadvertently mastered the mechanics of wing manipulation.

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A few flakes of down drifted in the air. Was it possible she was already going into a moult? A closer inspection allayed that fear. Fluff was merely being dislodged to make way for the tips of glossy white feathers.

Dressing, now a major problem, was solved to some extent by the use of a pair of scissors. By cutting slots in the backs of blouse and cardigan, and by leaving off her brassière—something she deplored even more than the mutilation of her lemon cardigan—she was able to clothe herself after a fashion. But it was clear that another visit to the doctor was out of the question. People, being what they are, would stand and stare. And not only that. Dr. Roderick had seen fit to use the word " surgery." The phrase " clip her wings " suddenly took on a new and pungent meaning.

" I don't feel up to making the journey," she told him over the telephone, an excuse near enough to the truth to satisfy her conscience.

Replacing his receiver, Dr. Roderick puzzled at the way his patient had hung up abruptly without giving him time to inquire how things were going.

He had thought a lot about Miss Bentley during the night and had been looking forward to seeing her again. For one thing there was the challenge of her strange indisposition. For another, there was her particular kind of attractiveness and her way of looking back at him over her shoulder. The new emotions that surged through him he thrust aside. He forced himself to think about her as just another patient. She had struck him as being a level-headed person. And, apart from the ridges, a healthy one.

There was only one conclusion to be drawn. Drawing it, he wondered why, if she wasn't keen on being seen out of doors, she hadn't suggested he visit her in her home. That led to a second conclusion. The growths must have developed to the extent of making her self-conscious even in the presence of a doctor.

Musing then on the possible nature of his patient's affliction, his thoughts turned first to her African background and then, naturally enough, to Dr. Toomey, a gentleman with whom association of any kind could bring nothing but good as far as prestige was concerned. Dr. Roderick reached for the telephone directory.

His pioneering days over, Dr. Toomey had exchanged his flamboyant past for the more solid comforts of a brass plate, an accommodating blonde receptionist and two ground-floor rooms in Harley Street. The receptionist made an appointment for Dr. Roderick to see the great man the following afternoon . . .

Miss Bentley, after a restless day, passed an even more restless

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night. Sleeping perforce on her stomach had induced heartburn. She woke with a great feeling of fatigue in the region of her shoulders. But then it was clear they had been working overtime during the hours of darkness. Her wings, now folded back neatly in the off position, were some four feet in length, composed of healthy-sheened white feathers and with delicately pointed tips that tickled the backs of her thighs when she walked. Blouse and cardigan were now as impracticable as the brassière. Pulling on a skirt—at least that was something—she debated before the open wardrobe the possibility of converting a flowered overall into a kind of angelic smock.

She shrugged in indecision, set off muscles and involuntarily unfurled her wings. The starboard one swept the dressing-table clear; the port-side tip found anchorage between two of the brass uprights at the foot of her bed, and required some manipulation before it freed itself. After that she was careful about making gestures of any kind. After donning the smock, back to front, she went round the house closing all the windows—just to be on the safe side—paying particular attention to those in her bedroom, they being quite large and overlooking a clump of trees with branches that had suddenly become almost unbearably inviting. For lunch, instead of the sliced chicken she had set ready the day before, she dined frugally off lettuce and watercress, finishing with a glass of water.

Dr. Roderick was kept waiting for some time for his appointment. Dr. Toomey, large and hairy, unbent immediately at the mention of Miss Bentley's name, displayed great interest as his visitor went into the details of her affliction, picked up the plates and studied them closely as Dr. Roderick hinted at the nature of his imaginative diagnosis.

"Aggie Bentley," boomed Dr. Toomey, dealing with first things first. " Well. A small world."

" Small indeed," agreed Dr. Roderick politely.

"A very capable woman, as I recall."

"And attractive," added Dr. Roderick with some fervour.

The other raised bushy brows a fraction and turned back once again to the X-rays.

" Your assessment of the case," he said, " shows imagination. I'm glad that you brought the problem to me. More things in heaven and earth, eh? "

" Something like that, sir. I mean, she did mention her African connections. One tends to associate that continent with things beyond our ken."

" The M'Lukus," agreed the other reminiscently. " Certainly

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a remarkable people. Clever in some ways. As it so happens I have some knowledge of ornithology." He tapped the X-rays. " I am in the position of being able to confirm from these your diagnosis. Aggie would certainly appear to be growing wings. So we ask ourselves, why?"

"A question of mind over matter, sir?"

"Undoubtedly. But whose mind? Not Aggie herself. I feel sure of that. Not the type at all; the last person one might accuse of being bird-brained. Where does that leave us? M'Bolaka."

" Pardon?" said Dr. Roderick.

" M'Bolaka. One of the M'Luku. Son of the tribal witch-doctor and a great friend of Aggie's in the old days. She was the only one of our party that he would take any notice of. Oddly enough, I had word from his part of the world only last week. He'd come of age and graduated as witch-doctor, first class with honours. And that leaves us with a coincidence . . ."

Dr. Roderick sat up straight. " You think that he—?"

" He could have done," agreed Dr. Toomey. " That kind of thing would be right up his street. But I don't think for one moment he did. Not unless Aggie specifically asked him to. Which I'm quite sure she didn't. And the last thing M'Bolaka would dream of doing would be to cause her any inconvenience."

" I remember—" he added reminiscently —"that she used to sing to him. He was greatly taken by her singing."

" She also sang," said Dr. Roderick, " to me. In the surgery. What one might call a full voice. But lacking in tonal quality."

"And in variety of material," agreed the other. "As I recall, she confined herself to the one song. Let me see—"

" O—" Dr. Roderick supplied, " for the wings of a dove."

" Yes," said Dr. Toomey. " And with great depth of feeling."

Understanding dawned on them both in the same moment. But it was too late. When they reached Miss Bentley's home all they found was a solitary large white feather on the window-ledge. Of its late owner there was no sign. Blouseless, cardiganless she was winging her lonely way across the oceans, flying, as she had repeatedly requested, far, far away. © L. P. Davies 1965

SOLUTION TO TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD (PAGE 167)

ACROSS. 1, Siesta. 4, Bluff. 7, Steer. 8, Vortex. 9, Bandoleer. 11, Stout. 13, Edict. 14, Man Friday. 18, Signal. 19, Tepid. 20, Natty. 21, Trusty.

DOWN. 1, So-so. 2, Eden. 3, Threat. 5, Untie. 6, Foxtrot. 8, Vide. 9, Buff. 10, Lady. 11, Samisen. 12, Gill. 13, Easter. 15, Night. 16, Opus. 17, Eddy.

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MOSCOW ASSIGNMENT

by Andrew Garve

MISS PHELPS spoke into the telephone. "Lord Quainton's here now, Mr. Cole . . . Yes, all right." She gave me a friendly nod. "You can go in." I thanked her, and went through into the Editor's room.

John Cole greeted me warmly. "Good to see you back, Tim," he said. I had worked for him for nearly ten years, first as reporter and then as foreign correspondent. I respected and liked him.

"Pull up a chair," he said. "Well, how are you? No neuroses? No Moscow blues?"

"I'm fine."

"Tim, you've been doing an excellent job. You're a big name now and I feel we ought to exploit you more. How would you feel about leaving the routine stuff, and concentrating on a really ambitious feature?"

"It sounds attractive. What exactly are you thinking of?"

"Well, you'll be going back in six weeks' time. How about making a winter journey—say, through the Ukraine? A comprehensive trip, covering the collective farms and the Don basin industries. Find out what their winter techniques are like, and, if they lag, where they lag. Nothing unfriendly—just a straight inquiry. I'm told they have never learned to cope with their winter, economically, industrially—the way the Middle West

A winter journey

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. . . . into danger

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or Canada has, and that this holds them back. It's an interesting angle. Do a long piece—perhaps ten thousand words—with plenty of colour and description. We'd run it for several weeks. How does the idea appeal to you?"

"There's nothing I'd like better. You know the difficulty, though. They wouldn't let me just go off on my own."

"Not even though you speak Russian like a native?"

"That's what would worry them most—I could talk to people too easily. No, they'd want to vet the itinerary and they'd insist on sending someone along with me."

"Would that matter?"

"It wouldn't matter a bit from the story point of view—it might even help. But they take such a long while to organise anything. I'll put it up to the Press Department directly I get back, and see what happens."

"Yes, do that—tell them we're very keen on the trip." Cole glanced at his watch. "I've got Bressov coming to dine tonight—the Counsellor at the Embassy. It would be nice if you could join us."

I hesitated, but only for a second. "I'm sorry," I said, "I'm afraid I'm already fixed up for tonight."

Cole grimaced. "Well, you're on leave, so I can't make it a command performance. I hope you have an enjoyable time."

"Thank you," I said. "I think I'm going to."

At eight o'clock that evening, I was sitting at a secluded table in the Gourmet Restaurant in Soho, waiting for a girl I'd met at a cocktail party only the night before.

I'd flown in from Moscow around noon, and checked in at a hotel off the Strand. Then I'd wandered along to the office to report to the Foreign Editor, and later drifted on to a film show and Press party. The party was like a million others, and I'd just decided to make an early night of it when I noticed a rather unusual-looking girl standing alone. I moved over, glass in hand, with an amiable, cocktail-party smile. She returned the smile. Her face had been rather grave in repose, but her smile was devastating.

She was, it appeared, the personal secretary of the producer, Anton Darlan. She looked about twenty-four. Her English was as accentless as mine, but the name she gave sounded like Maria Rashinsky. I asked her if she was Russian. "No, British," she replied, with a touch of indignation. It turned out that she spelled her name Raczinski and Marya with a "y." Her father had been a Pole, but he'd long ago become naturalised, and she'd been brought up in England.

I was fascinated by her. She was a tall brunette with greenish eyes and an air of tremendous distinction. She was beautifully groomed, she had poise, she appeared very sophisticated—and that smile! The old cliché about a face lighting up exactly

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described what happened. It was enchanting—and so was she. She wore no ring, which seemed incredible. We got on so well together that I dared to ask her if she'd dine with me next day.

So here I was at the Gourmet, a fairly hardbitten newspaperman with a quickened pulse; a bachelor of thirty crazily toying with the idea of abandoning his freedom if he was given half a chance—all on the strength of a smile and an hour's talk . . .

I'd been anxiously watching the door for more than twenty minutes when she arrived. I saw her come in and speak to the head waiter and I waved as she turned in my direction. There was a slightly puzzled expression on her face as she joined me.

" I'm sorry I'm late . . ."

" You came," I said, " that's all that matters." I helped her off with her coat. " What would you like to drink? "

" Tio Pepe, please." I ordered sherry and a martini for myself.

" You know," she said, " I could have sworn the head waiter said *Lord* Quainton when I asked for you."

" I expect he did. I've been here before."

" You mean you *are* a lord? "

" I could disclaim the title," I said.

She laughed. " The only lords I know are bald and elderly."

" Oh, we come all ages."

The drinks arrived. I raised my glass. " Well, it's nice to see you again, Marya. It's been a long time."

" You're rather foolish," she said. She sipped her sherry. " Do you like being a lord? "

" It has some advantages. Oddly enough, the Russians are rather impressed with titles."

The waiter hovered, with enormous menus. " Shall we order," I said. Marya chose melon and *escalope de veau Marsala*. I said I'd have the same. With Marya opposite me, looking perfectly delectable, I'd have been just as happy with a sandwich. I ordered a bottle of claret which I thought she'd like, and relaxed.

" You know," I said, " this is quite the most agreeable thing I've done in years."

" Really? Don't you enjoy yourself in Moscow? "

" ' Enjoy ' is a strong word. It's not exactly a carefree place."

" How did you come to be sent there? "

" Well, it all started with a Russian course in an Intelligence unit when I was a National Service man. Afterwards it seemed a waste not to use the language. I got a job reporting for the *Sunday Recorder* and applied for the Moscow post. I've been there three years now."

" And you only come back once a year? "

" Usually. It's not a life sentence, of course, just a stretch." That earned me another smile.

We went on talking about Russia for some time. But as soon as I got the chance, I switched the conversation to her job with the film company. " Do you like it? " I asked her.

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"Very much. Everyone in the film world is absolutely scatty of course. My real job is to prevent Anton getting ulcers. I spend most of my time smoothing his path."

"It sounds like a key job to me."

"It is," Marya said seriously.

I smiled. Her lack of false modesty was most refreshing. "What were you doing before that?"

"I was up at Oxford, taking an Arts degree."

"And before that?"

She made a face. "Finishing-school in Switzerland."

"And before that?"

"Now you really *do* sound like a newspaperman."

"Genuine personal interest, I assure you."

"Then I forgive you . . . But if it's my life story you're after I can tell you right away it's very dull. All the important and dramatic things happened before I was three, actually."

"But you know about them, so may I hear?"

"Yes, of course. I was born in Lvov, in Poland, in the middle of the war. My father had just graduated at the university there when the war started. He'd also just got married. He was very young, only twenty-one, but he had tremendous confidence in himself. Then Hitler's invasion shattered everything. The Russians came, then the Germans, and ordinary life disintegrated.

"Daddy had to do any job he could, just to get enough to eat. Then, in 1942, the Nazis sent him to a labour camp. Daddy was lucky—he was one of the few to survive. He was in camps for the rest of the war. The last one was the worst of all—it was called Loda. Have you heard of it?"

"Yes, indeed," I said. "It's notorious."

"The most appalling things happened there. Daddy will never talk about them . . . When the Red Army overran the camp in 1944, he escaped in the confusion and joined some other Poles in the forest. He fought the Nazis as a guerrilla for about three months and then he was shot in the knee. He lay hidden in a farmhouse for weeks afterwards, while he recovered. That was really the end of the war for him."

"And what about you?"

"The only thing I'd done was to get born. That was in 1942, just before Daddy was taken away. Soon afterwards, my mother died. People were dying in thousands at that time, of hunger and neglect. There weren't any near relations who could take care of me, and I was looked after by some neighbours—an old couple called Komarovski. Daddy learned all this when he made his way back to Lvov after the German collapse. It must have been a ghastly homecoming for him. His one idea was to get to the West, to take me out of it all—he set off on foot, carrying me. We finished up in a displaced persons' camp near Cologne. All the DPs wanted to get to England or America, but there were quotas and it wasn't easy. Daddy was fortunate—as he had

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qualifications in chemistry, he had a prospect of earning his living.

"Because Daddy had a degree they got him a research grant and a place to work at London University. He'd learned English, of course, and as soon as he could he became naturalised. There was a sort of nanny-housekeeper who looked after me—I was very fond of her. . . So I grew up. And that's really all."

"It's a terrific story," I said. "Is your father still at the University?"

"No, he left it in 1955—he decided he couldn't manage on an academic salary any more. He took a job with Floria Products—the cosmetic people. He's their chief chemist now."

"It sounds a big change. Does he like it?"

"He says he does—though I've an idea he finds the work very limited after what he was doing, because he's a brilliant man and I'm sure he could have gone a long way. But he was absolutely determined to give me the best possible education and background, and that meant a lot of expense."

"He's probably found the sacrifice well worth while," I said. "One way or another, he sounds a pretty remarkable man."

"He is."

"Do you live with him?"

"Yes, we have a flat in Hampstead. He drives out to the laboratory at Welwyn each morning, and I come into town."

"I'd like to meet him."

Marya smiled. "We'll see," she said.

During the next week or two Marya and I were together almost every evening. We dined and danced, we went to theatres. We had a wonderful time.

From Marya's point of view it must have seemed a bit of a *blitzkrieg*, and in the ordinary way I wouldn't have rushed things quite so much—getting to know each other was too enjoyable to hurry over. But as it was I seemed to have no choice, because of having to go back to Moscow. I wanted Marya for keeps, not for a season, and I felt that if we didn't reach some sort of understanding before I left, my chance might slip away. If it was humanly possible, I meant to leave a ring on her finger.

The more I learned of Marya, the more deeply I fell in love with her. What appealed to me most about her—apart from her physical attraction and the warm promise it held—was the honesty and genuineness of her personal feelings. It was, I decided, a particularly Slav trait, for I'd noticed it in many Russians as well—the lack of coquetry, the directness of response. Marya had a loyalty to her true self, a total absence of pretence. It seemed to me a rare and precious quality . . .

When Marya invited me to lunch, I went not without a certain trepidation, for I was anxious to make a good impression on Raczinski *père*. Marya opened the door to me, with a welcoming smile, and took me into the sitting room. She looked up at me,

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and I kissed her mouth. She kissed me back—shyly at first, then less shyly. I hadn't thought of her as passionate.

As she started to pour drinks, my roving eye was caught by a tiny, very faded photograph in a metal frame—of a pretty woman, hardly older than Marya now was.

"It's a bit pathetic, isn't it?" Marya said, as I studied it. "It was the only photograph of my mother that Daddy was able to salvage. But at least I know what she looked like."

There was a footfall in the hall, and Stefan Raczinski came in. Marya introduced us. Raczinski gave me a formal little bow with his heels together, and we shook hands. "Delighted," he said. He was a man of medium height, very squarely built, with a large head and an imposingly high forehead. He had fine, silvery hair which he wore loose, without a parting. His eyes were green like Marya's, but more deeply set, with dark pouches under them. His face was very lined, he seemed much older than his forty-six years. He looked like a man who had taken a beating from life.

Raczinski's manner was friendly, if a trifle wary. I could sense him appraising me. We exchanged the usual small talk, feeling our way. His English was fluent and accurate, but his accent was so strong that at first I had some difficulty in following him. He apologised for it. "I have a good eye for language," he said, "but unfortunately I have no ear. I am just comprehensible in English, impossible in French. As for German, I have never succeeded in getting my tongue round their words. Not," he added, "that I wish to." He eyed me sardonically. "So you are a correspondent in Moscow, Lord Quainton. Now what have you done to deserve that fate?"

I laughed. "It's not as bad as all that."

"You like the Russians?" He had the same directness of manner as Marya. In his case I found it slightly disconcerting.

"I don't like their political set-up," I said. "But as people, I like them very much."

"As a former Pole," he said, "I can forgive neither the Russians nor the Germans. The Nazis, of course, were unspeakable—their name will be a curse for ever. But the Russians, in their callous way, were hardly better—and we had them for much longer.

"The Russians still tyrannise over eastern Europe. They still hold the territories that they stole after the war. Our own birthplace, Lvov, is now a part of Russia." He pronounced it "Lvooff," in the Polish way. "You who are born English, Lord Quainton, do not always appreciate how fortunate you are. Freedom is the most precious of all possessions. Poland has rarely known it. But I will not bore you with my old hatreds. After all, I am English too, so I must be tolerant. I would have liked, though, to see Lvov again, before I died."

"Is there no chance of that?" I asked him.

"Not for me. From the Russian point of view, I committed the unforgivable sin after I escaped from the camp at Loda.

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Marya will have told you about Loda. I could have gone to the East and joined the Russians, as some did. Instead, I chose to come to the West. In their eyes, that was the choice of an enemy. In any case, I am not sure that I would really wish to see Lvov under established communist rule."

"Is it an attractive town?"

"Not breathtakingly beautiful, like Cracow, but very pleasant. It lies in a broad valley with a pretty river running through it—the Peltew, where I learned to fish. It is close to the mountains. My boyhood was spent in a house in Biesczady Street—a white, three-storeyed house with big, sunny balconies, and immediately opposite there was a lovely park—not formal, except for one fountain, but wild and hilly—a place for children to play in. I had only to slip across the road to be in paradise . . ." He gave a little sigh. "I tell myself often that I must not live in the past, especially as I have been so fortunate in England. I have found such kindness that to dwell on what is gone is ungrateful."

Raczinski got up and I noticed that he limped a little.

Marya saw that I noticed. "Daddy's leg still troubles him a bit."

"It is nothing," Raczinski said. "Again, I was very fortunate. If the bullet had struck a fraction higher, my knee would have been smashed and that would probably have been the end of me. Instead it cut through behind the knee." He demonstrated, clutching the back of his trouser leg. "Not even a tendon was severed. It becomes a little stiff only when I take no exercise . . . Now, Lord Quainton, let me refill your glass."

I'd begun to wonder how well I was going to get on with Marya's father. I could see that he was a redoubtable figure, a man of forceful personality, but he seemed a bit too opinionated and egocentric for my taste. Then, over a most agreeable lunch, I changed my mind about him. He proved to be an attentive host and, surprisingly, an urbane listener.

When, after lunch, Marya and I went for a walk across Hampstead Heath in the pale November sun, and she asked me if I liked her father, I was able to say quite honestly that I did.

She looked very relieved. "It's odd—I've never heard him talk quite so bitterly about the past. But then he has been rather upset lately. Anyway, you liked him, that's what matters. He liked you, too—very much."

"I'm glad of that," I said. With the parental hurdle taken, the moment seemed ripe to talk about the future. "Marya—when are we going to get married?"

Her hand tightened in mine. For a second or two she said nothing. Then she looked up at me, searching my face. "Are you quite sure you want to?"

"You know I want to. More than anything in the world. I love you, Marya. I'll always love you."

"I want to marry you, Tim . . . but I'm just a little afraid."

"Of what, for goodness' sake?"

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"Oh—I don't know . . . Of being Lady Quainton, perhaps."

"Listen," I said, "let's get this straight once and for all. I'm an ordinary person—you've absolutely nothing to live up to. And you've everything to give me. Darling, marrying you is the greatest privilege I could ask. I'll be the luckiest, proudest man in the world—and probably the most possessive. Now will you please stop talking rubbish?"

She smiled. "All right," she said. "We'll get married."

I held her close and we kissed. "When?" I asked.

"If only it could be today!"

I put in the highest bid I could. "I've still got a week. We could marry, and you could come back with me to Moscow."

"Oh, darling, that would be wonderful . . . But I don't think I can. I must give Daddy time to get used to the idea. Couldn't you fly back at Easter?"

"Five months?"

"I know—it seems ages. But the time would soon go."

"All right," I said, "that's settled. Easter it is." I drew her to me again. "Darling Marya—it's so good to be alive."

With my leave running out, the problem was to find time for all the things we had to do. Then there were several friends Marya was anxious I should meet. There was the ring to get. On the Wednesday, I decided I must spend the morning in the office library, working on my projected Ukraine trip.

In the corridor I ran into our diplomatic correspondent.

"You're looking very smug, Tim," he said.

I laughed. "As a matter of fact, I've just fixed up to get married."

"Well, I'm glad. Who's the lucky girl?"

"Her name's Marya Raczinski. She was born a Pole, though you wouldn't know it now. Her father came over after the war—Stefan Raczinski."

"Stefan Raczinski . . ." He frowned . . . "Now that name rings a faint bell. I'm almost sure I remember a Stefan Raczinski in the news. Some case years ago. It could have been a different man, of course."

"I expect so."

"Anyway, congratulations!"

I took down an atlas and spent some time in the library making a rough itinerary, but there was something at the back of my mind, and soon I went over and looked through the personal files. Sure enough, there was one marked RACZINSKI, Stefan, Dr. It was so slim that at first I thought it must be empty, but I found just one yellowish cutting.

It was from the *Post*, quoting an agency message from Moscow. The date was June 11th, 1953. The message said:

The Moscow evening newspaper Vechernaya Moskva carried a report that a Dr. Stefan Raczinski has been condemned in absentia by a special court to ten years' imprisonment for war

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crimes allegedly committed in Loda camp in 1944. According to Soviet sources, Dr. Raczinski is at present resident in England and is working at the University of London.

Above the text was a photograph of Marya's father.

It was a horrible shock. I didn't believe for a moment that Raczinski *had* committed any war crimes, but that wasn't the point. A beastly charge had been levelled against him—and I knew about it. I knew, and I didn't think I could ignore it. Suddenly, all the joy had gone out of the day. I wondered if Marya knew and, if not, how she'd take it. I wondered why Raczinski hadn't mentioned it. I couldn't help feeling that he'd been less than frank with me. This, surely, was the main reason why he would never be able to return to Lvov.

I slipped the cutting into my pocket book and went off in a distinctly troubled frame of mind. Marya had asked me round to the flat for drinks with her father before he left for a dinner engagement, and I realised I must take what might be my only chance to speak to him about the report of the trial.

Raczinski put down his glass and glanced at the cutting I had given him—then handed it to Marya, and turned to me with a rueful smile. " I see one should never choose a newspaperman as a prospective son-in-law. I had almost forgotten this incident." He continued to smile. " Do I have to deny the charge? "

Anger and incredulity showed in Marya's face. " But this is monstrous! How dare they? It's horrible . . ."

" Marya's right," I said. " But did no-one try to interview you."

" Oh, one or two reporters did come to see me, but I dislike publicity, I was not an important person and I had nothing to say. Marya was only a child of eleven at the time, and as for telling her later, it didn't occur to me. The charge was nonsense, and it soon went out of my mind."

" Yes, I see why you didn't tell me," Marya said.

Raczinski shrugged. " It could have been a mistake. The Russian report could have mixed me up with someone else. There were two witnesses, neither of whom meant anything to me."

" You mean that someone in the camp may have done the things the witnesses said, and they got the name wrong? "

" It is possible."

" True." I paused. " I'm a bit surprised the FO didn't send out a photograph of you, and demand proper identification."

Marya was beginning to look restive. " Daddy's already said he wasn't important, Tim."

Raczinski shrugged again. " I did not press them—I had no desire to defend myself against any Russian charge. Now I suggest we forget all about it, and have a drink."

Raczinski left us soon afterwards for his dinner engagement.

The moment the door had closed behind him, Marya said, " Well—are you satisfied that Daddy didn't do it? "

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" Don't be silly," I said, " of course I am."

" You seemed very interested in all the details."

" I'm interested in everything the Russians do . . . Anyway, it's *obvious* he didn't do it. A man who'd done something like that would hardly have crossed Europe in the same name—he'd have changed it. And he wouldn't have told everyone he'd been in Loda camp, either—he'd have kept quiet about it."

Marya grew more distant. " I'm glad you were able to think up arguments to convince yourself."

" Well, what's wrong with that? "

" If you were really satisfied, you wouldn't need to."

" I've told you. I accept everything your father said."

" You accept, yes. But are you *certain*? "

" Yes."

" There isn't the tiniest chink of doubt in your mind? "

I suppose I hesitated. Marya went very pale.

" You're not certain," she said. " And you never will be."

I did my utmost to reassure her. I tried everything. But I just couldn't reach her. We parted miserably, with only a vague understanding that we'd meet the next evening. I spent a wretched night, cursing myself for the clumsy way I'd handled things. I could see now that I'd been absolutely crazy to produce those well-meant arguments in Raczinski's defence. But the damage was done.

I tried to telephone Marya at the flat in the morning but there was no reply. I rang her office, and they said she was meeting Anton for some conference.

When I got back to the hotel just after three, I found a note from Marya waiting for me. It said:

> I hate having to write this to you, but after what has happened I don't see how I can marry you and I think we'd better call it all off. I'm afraid this shadow would always be between us and for your sake as well as mine I daren't take the risk. It would be different if you could *prove* the truth to yourself, but that's impossible. As it is, I'd never know a moment's peace. I'd always be imagining you watching me, and wondering—wondering if, after all, you had introduced some undesirable streak into your family. I couldn't bear it.
>
> I've been so happy with you, darling. I looked forward so much to being your wife. I'm as wretched about it as I know you must be. But I honestly think it's the best way. I'm going away for a few days, because there's really nothing more to say—at least not now. I think it will be easier for us both if I stay away until you've left. I hope you won't feel angry about this. I do love you very much. Marya

I waited impatiently till a quarter to seven and then rang

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Dr. Raczinski in Hampstead. He sounded very upset. " You have heard from Marya? I can hardly tell you, Tim, how sorry I am that this has happened. I think Marya is wrong—stubbornly wrong. I think she has manufactured this trouble for herself."

I didn't feel like discussing her. " Anyway," I said, " I don't accept her decision. Tell her that. And I shall write to her."

" Yes, please write, Tim, I feel sure that this is not the end—not if you will be patient. Marya loves you and needs you. In time I think she will become more reasonable. I will certainly do my best to bring that about, all this is great sadness for me."

" Thank you," I said. " Goodbye, Dr. Raczinski."

Forty-eight hours later, I flew to Moscow.

EVERYTHING about the Russian capital on that December afternoon seemed to match my dismal mood.

The air was lifeless, the cloud-cover leaden. Thin flakes of snow drifted slowly down. The people around the airport building, swathed in their winter clothes, looked shapeless and glum. I had to wait nearly half an hour for a taxi; when it came it was an old boneshaker with a heater that didn't work. I sat and froze.

The view along the route was as chilling as the temperature. The fallen snow was dirty and drab and had evidently been lying for some time. Groups of muffled road-sweepers, mostly women, were dourly attacking the hummocky, hard-packed ice with picks and shovels and drills. Not a building showed any trace of charm or quality. Nowhere was there any colour or light. I almost regretted that I'd agreed to come back to this big and ugly city.

It was a passing feeling. My spirits rose as the green turrets of the Kremlin came into sight and the taxi approached the older district of Arbat. The residential streets there, tree-lined and quiet, still had some elegance, and the house where I lived—the home of a former Moscow merchant—was dignified and comfortable. I shared it with three other newspapermen.

It was full of red plush and antimacassars and potted evergreen plants and Victorian bric-a-brac. Its double windows, like all windows in Moscow, had been sealed with strips of paper to keep out draughts. Only a tiny ventilating pane in each room, called a *fortushka*, now admitted any air, but at least the stuffiness could be controlled. We were looked after by a buxom, middle-aged woman who cooked well and only occasionally stole our shirts and shaving-cream. It was quite a snug arrangement . . .

First thing next morning I rang the Nark and asked for an appointment with our main official contact, Rodion Pavlov, top man at the Press Department of the Foreign Ministry. (Years back, the Russian abbreviation for People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs had been Narkomindyel, and for us, the name " Nrak " had stuck.)

Pavlov's secretary, Nina Alexandrovna, was friendly, but vague.

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"I will let you know, Lord Quainton, when he will be free. Probably it will be tomorrow."

That suited me well. I glanced quickly through the morning papers to make sure nothing sensational had happened overnight. Then I dug out my black astrakhan hat, my Russian overcoat with the astrakhan collar, and my shiny Russian briefcase, and set out on foot for the Lenin Library in Mokhovaya Street, wearing my Russian shoes and galoshes. In that rig-out I looked more like a Soviet functionary than a foreigner. I'd often found that it smoothed the way in minor inquiries.

The pavements were covered with knobs and ridges of ice and were very treacherous, but I soon rediscovered the wary, slithering step I'd learned over the years.

The weather had brightened and I was making for the one picturesque spot in Moscow. Ahead of me lay the granite-lined curve of the Moskva river, now frozen into stillness; the Kremlin with its delicate pink walls and green-topped towers and golden domes; the quaint onion-stripes of St. Basil's; and Red Square, with its line of patient pilgrims queuing at the Mausoleum.

I paused for a moment to let a squad of bosomy Red Army girls go by, singing their heads off; then committed myself to a vast square with twelve traffic lanes and hardly any pedestrian islands, pursued by the noise of a raucous loudspeaker exhorting me to buy State bonds. The crossing wasn't the suicidal adventure it might have been, because in fact there was only enough traffic for two lanes, and the greatest hazard proved to be a group of small boys rolling a big log home.

In twenty minutes I reached the Lenin Library—I'd been to the library several times before. What I didn't know was whether they kept back files of newspapers . . .

I filled in a form and waited for a little over half an hour. Then a girl librarian appeared, dusty but triumphant, and slapped down a file in front of me. I thanked her, and turned to the issue of *Vechernaya Moskva* for June 11th, 1953.

There was a big headline—*THREE MORE WAR MISCREANTS BROUGHT TO ACCOUNT.* The story was a characteristic example of Soviet reporting—masses of verbiage, with only the tiniest kernel of fact. The special court, no details were given, not even the date on which it had met, had tried two other men besides the one they called Raczinski—one Russian and one Ukrainian. Both had been charged with beating prisoners at Loda, and both had been sentenced to death. Evidence against Raczinski had been given by two Russians, Ivan Phillipovitch Lutkin and Pavel Alexandrovitch Skaliga, who said they had been at the camp with him. According to their statements, both overheard him disclosing to a camp guard the existence of an escape plot. As a result, all the men concerned in the plot had been executed. No one, it seemed, had asked the two witnesses any questions, and no details of their evidence had been reported.

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Judgment had been pronounced at once. That was all . . .

I doubted if it had been worth the trek to the library.

I spent the afternoon at my desk in Arbat with a rather inadequate map, working on my provisional itinerary for the Ukraine trip before putting it to Pavlov. My projected route took in the iron of Krivoi Rog, the Donetz coal basin, the fertile "black earth" steppe south of Poltava, the city of Kiev and the port of Odessa. I also typed out a formal request for the trip on headed paper of the *Sunday Recorder* and signed the letter over a special rubber stamp I'd had made. You don't get anywhere in Russia without a special rubber stamp. Late in the afternoon Nina rang to say I could have an appointment at ten in the morning.

Sharp on the hour next day I arrived at the Nark—an old, solid building in Bolshaya Lubianka Street. It was close by the headquarters of the security police, the MGB, and only a stone's throw from the Lubianka prison. I showed my pass at the door, left my coat, hat, scarf, gloves and galoshes in the vestibule—wearing outdoor clothes indoors in Russia is regarded as the height of bad manners—and went through into the outer office where Nina presided. She was a handsome girl in her late twenties, a tall, dark Leningrader. She gave me a smiling welcome and said Mr. Pavlov wouldn't be long. In fact I waited only twenty minutes, which was almost a record for speed. Then her bell tinkled and she asked me to go in.

Rodion Pavlov was a goodlooking and very intelligent man of about forty with whom I'd always had excellent relations at the personal level. He was dark and dapper in appearance, and he always managed to maintain a front of unruffled courtesy. A meeting with him could develop quickly into a fencing-match, but if he ever became unpleasant it was only in the subtlest way. He seemed marked out for high office in the Soviet diplomatic.

He rose from his leather armchair, and greeted me with a cordial handshake. "Welcome back, Lord Quainton." He offered me a cigarette, which I politely declined. Russian cigarettes have tobacco at one end and cardboard at the other, and to me both ends taste alike.

"So you're going to be with us for at least another year?"

"That seems to be the idea."

"Now what are your plans? Is there any way in which I can be of help to you?"

"There is indeed." I told him about the trip I hoped to make. I explained fully the idea behind it, since lack of frankness now would only recoil on me later. He was silent for a while, weighing the project. "Where had you thought of going?"

I passed him the letter I'd written, and he read it through.

"Quite an ambitious trip. It would require, I should think, at least a month. And, in midwinter, it would need to be organised with the greatest care, otherwise it could be very uncomfortable.

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Transport, stopping places, facilities—everything would have to be fixed up in advance."

"Well, you've always been very good at that," I said.

His dark eyes sparkled. "I've heard less complimentary opinions from some of your colleagues, Lord Quainton . . . I'll see what can be done and I'll let you know."

I thanked him. "There is one other thing," I said. "It's a personal matter—and rather a delicate one."

He inclined his head. "I can be very discreet."

"I'm afraid it's not your discretion I'm asking for, Mr. Pavlov, but your assistance. While I was on leave, I met a girl whom I hope to marry . . ."

"Indeed? My felicitations."

". . . Then, a few days ago, I discovered that her father, Stefan Raczinski, had been condemned *in absentia* as a war criminal—by a Soviet court." I outlined the facts as I knew them.

I chose my words carefully, knowing that a wrong nuance would abruptly end our talk. "Naturally," I said, "I'm not questioning the verdict of the court on the man who was found guilty. What I'm wondering is whether there could have been some mistake of identity. I've met Raczinski. I can't see him as the sort of man who would betray his fellow prisoners."

"A subjective judgment, of course," Pavlov said. "If you plan to marry his daughter, you would wish to think the best of him." Pavlov gave a faint shrug. "Anyone can make a mistake—we are all human. I have no definite opinion myself in this matter because I am entirely unfamiliar with it. What exactly are you asking me to do?"

"I'm asking you," I said, "as a great personal favour to me, to look into the case. I have the names of the two witnesses. They could be asked to describe Raczinski. I have a photograph of him here. It might be that they would say at once that he wasn't the man. I realise I'm asking a great deal—that there's nothing at stake but the happiness of two people . . ."

"Happiness is not unimportant, Lord Quainton. Nor is justice. But we must be practical. All this, you say, occurred some ten years ago. The witnesses may be dead. Even if they are alive, the Soviet Union is a big place. It would be hard to find them."

"With your resources, I think you could do it."

Pavlov shook his head doubtfully. "Our resources have many calls on them. If we were to find the witnesses, I think it very likely that the man they described would prove to be your Stefan Raczinski. Then where would you be?"

"I'm prepared to take that risk," I said. "All I want is to be convinced of the truth—whatever it is."

"I understand. Well, I will make some inquiries. What was it your great jurist said, 'Justice must not only be done—it must be seen to be done.'" In other circumstances, that would have given me a belly laugh. As it was, I just smiled . . .

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I'd carried the inquiry forward in the only way I could, but I'd no illusions that I'd made any great progress. If Raczinski was right, and the Russians had made a mistake about him and knew it, they weren't at all likely to want to reopen the case, and the chances were I'd hear no more. If they didn't think they'd made a mistake it seemed unlikely they'd go to the trouble of looking into it again for my sake.

Then, scarcely more than a week after my return, I had a phone call from Nina asking me to go at once to the Nark to see Pavlov. Her tone of urgency was so unusual that I felt sure it must be about the trip. But it wasn't. It was about the witnesses.

"It seems you were right about our resources, Lord Quainton," Pavlov said with a smile, after we'd exchanged the usual courtesies. "Apparently the old addresses of these two men had been filed away. The witness Skaliga will be no help at all—he has just been discharged from an inebriates' home in Moscow and is in no condition to describe anything—except perhaps a circle! But the other man, Lutkin, is fit and well, and is working in Tula. In the circumstances, we would be prepared to bring him to Moscow. In the interests of better understanding, and as a mark of our esteem for you."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Pavlov."

"Would three o'clock tomorrow afternoon be convenient for you for an interview? In this office?"

"Perfectly."

"Then that is settled. Until tomorrow, Lord Quainton."

Hopefully, I was at the Nark on the dot of three next day. Nothing happened until nearly four. Then there were footsteps in the corridor and a little man with a briefcase came in and said rather breathlessly that his name was Lutkin. He was about fifty years old, wore thick glasses, and had the look of an office worker in a fairly humble position. Nina led the way into Pavlov's room.

There was a little pause as Pavlov and I both studied Lutkin. Then Pavlov said, "You are Ivan Phillipovitch Lutkin?" Lutkin nodded. "This is Lord Quainton, a British newspaper correspondent." Lutkin nodded again, to me. He looked rather nervous.

Pavlov addressed Lutkin. "You were once in Loda camp, Comrade Lutkin, is that right? In 1953 you gave evidence in a Moscow court together with Pavel Alexandrovitch Skaliga, against a man named Raczinski who was not then present?"

"That is correct," Lutkin said.

"Lord Quainton wishes to ask you some questions. Please answer them to the best of your ability." Pavlov gestured to me.

"How long were you in Loda camp, Mr. Lutkin?" I asked.

"About three months."

"Was this man you accused there for the whole of that time?"

"No, only for the last three or four weeks. He was brought in shortly before the Loda camp was liberated by our glorious Red Army."

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"As a prisoner?"

"Yes."

"Where exactly did you meet him?"

"He was in the same hut as Skaliga and myself."

"I see. How did you come to overhear his conversation with the German guard?"

"Skaliga and I were walking to the toilet block. As we approached it we heard voices inside. A man was speaking of an escape plan from our hut. He stopped talking as we entered. It was Raczinski. The other man was a guard. Afterwards, fifteen men were taken from our hut and shot."

"Did Raczinski come back to the hut?"

"No, I didn't see him again."

"Did you know of this escape plan yourself?"

"No—I wasn't approached."

"*Was* there a plan?"

"Oh, yes, there was one. I learned about it afterwards."

"What was Raczinski speaking when you overheard him?"

Lutkin frowned. "I think it was German."

"You understand German?"

"Yes, quite well."

"How did you know this man's name was Raczinski?"

"He told us."

"Did you hear his first name?"

"Yes—Stefan."

"Did you call him Raczinski, or Stefan?"

Lutkin blinked at me. "I didn't call him anything. I didn't talk to him much. Nor did anyone."

"In that case," I said, "you may only have heard his name once or twice during the three weeks or so he was with you?"

"It's possible."

"Then are you quite sure his name *was* Raczinski?"

"That was the name he gave."

"Did you ever see it written down?"

"No."

"You merely heard it, just once or twice. Could you have been mistaken in the name? Could it have been, say, Ravinsky?"

Lutkin hesitated. "I think it was Raczinski."

Pavlov, who had been following the dialogue with close attention, said sharply, "This is very important, Comrade Lutkin. Thinking is not enough. Are you sure of the name, or are you not?"

Lutkin seemed to shrink into his chair. "It's a long time ago, Comrade Pavlov. Nearly twenty years. I am sure of what happened—it is etched into my mind for ever. But the exact name, a slight difference in sound, that is another matter."

For the first time, Pavlov looked disturbed.

I turned again to Lutkin. "This man," I said, "this Raeetsky or Ravinsky or Raczinski—can you describe him?"

Lutkin stared down at the floor. "I will try. He was a fairly

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tall man. I think. At least, of medium height. A youngish man."

"How young?"

"Perhaps thirty—perhaps a little less."

"What was his face like? Was it fat, thin, ugly, scarred?"

"I have a bad memory for faces, *gospodeen*—and it is so long ago. But I think he was quite goodlooking."

"What about his head? Was there anything special about it?"

"I seem to remember he had rather a big head."

Pavlov intervened again. "You must try to be more specific, Comrade Lutkin. Was it long? Was it broad?"

Lutkin quailed. "Just—big. I am sorry, Comrade Pavlov, I cannot be more sure. At the trial no one asked these things."

I produced the photograph of Raczinski and passed it to him. "Is that the man?"

He held it close to his face, peering at it through his bulbous lenses. There was a long silence. "Yes," he said at last, "I think—" He broke off. "He was younger then, of course. It could be . . ." Slowly, he shook his head. "I am not sure."

Pavlov took the photograph and studied it. "I would not think this face was easy to forget—not once you had seen it. The head is quite exceptional."

"It was a long while ago," Lutkin repeated. "And I have a bad memory for people." Pavlov turned coldly away from him.

"You may leave, Comrade Lutkin. The car which brought you will take you to the station."

Lutkin looked very shaken. "Will there be trouble, Comrade Pavlov? Everything I told the court was true."

"There will be no trouble," Pavlov said. He opened the door and let Lutkin out. His face was solemn as he turned back to me. "Well—that was a remarkable interview, Lord Quainton."

"Yes," I said. "Most instructive. Naturally, I think more than ever that a mistake was made."

"Yes, I can understand that. But this negative evidence of Lutkin, this failure of memory, is far from conclusive. I can hold out no hope that the case will be officially reopened."

"I don't expect that—Raczinski himself isn't worried—he always thought it was a case of mistaken identity. The difficulty was to make his daughter believe that I thought so. Now I hope to do just that."

Pavlov looked relieved. "Well, I certainly hope you succeed, Lord Quainton. Now is there anything more I can do for you?"

"The trip?" I said hopefully.

"I am working on that, and you will hear something very soon."

I walked back to Arbat feeling more cheerful than at any time since the start of the Raczinski trouble. I couldn't see how even the ultra-sensitive Marya could have anything more to worry about. She'd demanded certainty and I *was* certain—on very good grounds. All I had to do now was to write and tell her about Lutkin.

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It was only when I started to rehearse in my mind the actual details of the letter I'd send that I began to feel a little less satisfied about the adequacy of the Lutkin interview. Peering through those thick glasses, he'd seemed half blind to me, and it was possible he'd never clearly seen the face he'd called Raczinski's.

I began to wonder then about the other witness, Skaliga. A compulsive drunk might prove no more reliable than a myopic when it came to descriptions—but drunks have their lucid moments. Now if he turned out to have normal recollections and rejected the photograph, that really would be conclusive. But what were my chances of finding him without calling in the authorities again?

I was still thinking about it as I reached our house, and went up to my room. First of all, I tried the phone book. There were no Skaligas. I wasn't surprised—the Moscow phone book is pretty thin. Next I went through some dope I'd picked up at the Commissariat of Health. It was propaganda stuff, but there was a section on *The War Against Alcoholism*, and three " curative centres " in Moscow were mentioned. I looked up their telephone numbers and phoned the first one, asking for the secretariat.

" My name is Leo Popov," I said. " *Dr.* Popov. I've just flown in from the Lenin hospital in Alma Ata and I'm looking for a former patient of mine named Pavel Alexandrovitch Skaliga. I understand he's recently been discharged from your institution, but he isn't at his old address. Can you tell me, please, the address he was discharged to? "

I drew a blank at the first place—they hadn't heard of him. I then got two wrong numbers in succession and had an altercation with the operator. All telephone systems are infuriating, but the Moscow one is in a class by itself. Finally I was put through to the second place on my list. They looked up the name—and they found it. I'd wondered at the Nark if that inebriate business had been some sort of excuse, but it wasn't. Skaliga had been discharged, they said, about two weeks ago. The address he'd given was Flat 6, House 4, Mali Pereulok. I put down the receiver with a feeling of achievement.

Directly after dinner I changed into an old padded jacket and trousers that I sometimes used on trips, slipped a half litre of vodka into each side pocket, and set off for Mali Pereulok on the eastern outskirts of the city. I wore a black leather hat with turned-down earflaps, and the spacious felt boots that the Russians call *valinki*. It was an outfit that wouldn't catch the eye of the *dvornik* at House 4, if he was around.

I took a trolley bus across town. At that time of night it was comparatively empty—there was hardly anyone actually clinging to the outside. As soon as I got in at the back door I started to fight my way to the front one, which was the exit. The trolley came off the wire at two crossings and the girl driver had to shin up on to the roof and sort out the chaos singlehanded in a shower of sparks. Otherwise the journey was uneventful.

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I got out a couple of hundred yards from Mali Pereulok. It was a wretched district—a bleak main road with dilapidated pavements and bad lighting and sinister sidestreets lined with ancient tenement blocks. It took me quite a while to find House 4, for most of the bulbs had been removed from the street lamps. When finally I did, I pushed through the paintless double doors and climbed the bare concrete stairway as though I were a resident. There was no sign of the house porter. The air smelt of dirt and old clothes and neglected lavatories and the cheap home-grown tobacco, *makhorka*. It was horrible, but familiar.

I found Flat 6 on the third floor, and knocked. I could hear voices. I knocked again, and a blowzy woman opened the door. I said, " Is Pavel Alexandr'itch home? " as though I knew him. I went in. The room was about ten feet by twelve. It had three iron bedsteads in it, two wooden chairs, a spittoon in a corner, and not much else. A man in singlet and trousers was stretched out on one of the beds. He sat up as I entered, leaning heavily on one elbow. He was a big, fleshy man of fifty or so, with a sallow face and bleary eyes. There was an empty tumbler beside him on a wooden box and I smelled vodka—but I couldn't see any around.

" Who are you? " he asked truculently. He wasn't drunk, but he wasn't sober either.

" My name is Quainton," I said. " I'm an English newspaper correspondent. Are you Pavel Alexandrovitch Skaliga? "

" Yes," he said.

" Then I'd like to talk to you about what happened at Loda camp twenty years ago."

He sank back on the bed. " I've nothing to say to you. Get out."

" I talked this afternoon to Ivan Philipovitch Lutkin at Narkomindyel," I told him. " It was all official. There's no reason why you shouldn't talk too." He was in a pretty fuddled state, but he seemed to take that in. He looked at me doubtfully.

" I've come all the way across town," I said, " and it's cold tonight. Fifteen degrees of frost . . . At least we could have a drink." I produced the two bottles of vodka.

I could see by the way he eyed them that he wouldn't be able to say no. But he stalled. " You don't look like a correspondent," he said His speech, though slurred, was educated.

I showed him my Press card, which had my photograph on it. He glanced, and waved it away.

" Well, there's no harm in having a drink," he said. He heaved himself off the bed and found a second glass. He opened one of the vodka bottles with a practised tap at its base, and poured two stiff shots. From a cupboard he produced a piece of black bread, which he broke in half. " Your health! " he said.

I raised my glass to him and we downed the vodka. He broke off a bit of bread and ate it. I did the same.

" You drink like a Russian." He poured two more shots.

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"What did you want to ask me about?"

"About a man named Ravinsky or Radetsky who was in the camp with you. You gave evidence against him at a trial in 1953."

"You mean Raczinski? That bastard?"

"Are you sure that was his name—Raczinski?"

"You bet I'm sure. There's nothing wrong with my memory." He grinned. "Not when I'm sober."

"Can you describe this man?"

"Of course I can describe him . . ." He raised his glass again. "Your health!" We went through the routine. What colour there was in his face drained away, and I wasn't surprised. I was beginning to feel muzzy myself, and he was refilling the glasses. Obviously I'd got to work fast.

"Then describe him," I said.

"He was a short, stocky man. He had a big head. And a great, high forehead. . . And he'd been shot in the knee."

I stared at him incredulously. "Shot in the knee?"

"Yes—at the back here." He demonstrated—just as Raczinski had done. "The bullet missed the bone and went through the muscle. Pity it didn't go through his head."

"I understood he got his wound after he left the camp?"

"No, *gospodeen*, before. I saw it."

"You mean he showed it to you? Lutkin said he wasn't popular—that hardly anyone talked to him."

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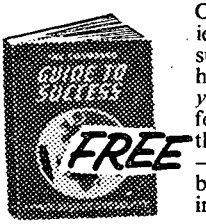

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" That's right—but he talked to me. He tried to make me believe he'd got the wound defending Warsaw, when the Germans first attacked. Making out he was a loyal Pole. Swine! "

I showed him the photograph. " Is that the man? "

He gave it one glance. " That's Raczinski. Only he looked younger then. See the high forehead? " He gazed at me with sudden suspicion. " You know him? "

" I've met him."

" If *I* met him," Skaliga said, " I'd break his neck." He opened the second bottle and poured two more shots. They looked like four to me. " You know what he did? "

I struggled to remember. " Lutkin said he betrayed an escape plan. That you overheard him talking to a guard."

" Yes, in the lavatory."

" What language was he talking? "

" German, *gospodeen*, German."

" Do you understand German? "

" Enough. He was talking fast—but I understood."

" You mean he was fluent? "

" He was talking like a German. I think he *was* a German. A spy, sent to the camp to listen. I saw him once, afterwards, joking with the guards. After the prisoners had been shot."

" He told me he was a Pole," I said.

" You can't believe a word that bastard says." Skaliga reached for his glass, missed it, clutched it. " Your health, *gospodeen*."

I drank, and staggered to my feet. " I must go."

He was suddenly truculent again. " Not yet. There's more in the bottle . . ." I blundered past him to the door, and out through the hall to the stairs. My head and my thoughts were whirling. In the street, I was violently sick.

Several things emerged from that squalid encounter, and I didn't like any of them.

First, it was no longer possible to believe that Stefan Raczinski had been the victim of mistaken identity. Unlike Lutkin, Skaliga had described his characteristics so exactly that I couldn't doubt it was Marya's father he'd been talking about. That still left the alternative that the charge against Raczinski had been deliberately concocted—that Lutkin and Skaliga had been briefed to give lying testimony at a bogus propaganda trial. But in that case, would Pavlov have gone to the trouble of producing Lutkin for me? Or, once produced, would he have been allowed to give such a pitiful exhibition of uncertainty about Raczinski? Then there was the wound in the knee. Skaliga had been utterly convincing about having seen it. Besides, his description had been perfect. Yet I had a clear recollection of Marya telling me that the wound had been received in guerrilla fighting after Raczinski's escape. Had he lied to her? And if so, why? Now I couldn't help wondering about the rest of his story. I made up my mind to try a new line of inquiry . . .

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Twenty-four hours later I was on the train to Lvov. It was an overnight journey and if my mind hadn't been so full of doubts and anxieties I'd have enjoyed it. The broad-gauge train ambled along soothingly at thirty miles an hour. I managed to catch up on some sleep, and when we ran into Lvov at ten in the morning I felt physically ready for anything. I had no luggage except my pyjamas and a toothbrush in a briefcase and I simply walked off the platform and that was that.

Despite the awkward revelations of Skaliga, I'd come to Lvov in hope. My belief in Raczinski had been shaken, not destroyed. I now hoped to find evidence supporting his story—evidence, in particular, that he had been Polish-born, that he had been a citizen of Lvov and not, as Skaliga had declared, a German.

At a kiosk I bought a guide to the town and quickly planned my route.

I set off at a brisk pace. It was a splendid day for walking, with just enough frost to keep the light covering of snow crisp and dry. I soon realised why Raczinski had liked the town so much. It was beautifully situated in a circle of hills, with the snow-covered slopes of low mountains shining in the distance. Fascinating tumuli were dotted about the town, surmounted by castles and monuments. There was a feeling of age and history about the place—of Polish history. A lot of the people I passed were talking Polish, and most of the rest Ukranian. In spite of the official

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Russian presence I could almost feel I'd left the Soviet Union.

I crossed the river Peltew, now frozen, where Raczinski had told me he'd fished as a boy, and made my way to the university. I introduced myself as a British correspondent on holiday from Moscow, who had been asked by a Polish friend to trace a man named Stefan Raczinski, a student there just before the war. Had they any records? Was there anyone who might remember him?

They were interested, friendly—but regretful. The records had all been destroyed. After the war, the university had had to make a completely fresh start.

I was disappointed but; not greatly surprised. I thanked the secretary and set off at once for the town hall. The registrar's office was busy. I told the same story, except that now my interest was in the records of Stefan Raczinski's birth, of his marriage just before the war, of Marya Raczinski's birth and of her mother's death. The clerk listened with increasing impatience, shaking his head. No records had survived the war, he said. It was well known that the Germans had destroyed everything . . .

I wasn't too despondent, I'd still plenty of time for what I'd all along regarded as the best bet. I checked with my map again, and walked through to Biesczady Street. My spirits rose sharply. I could see at once that this was the street Raczinski had described. For a hundred yards along one side of it there was a garden that looked like a piece of natural country. Children were sliding and tobogganning down the slopes. Through the gate I could see the one touch of formality that Raczinski had mentioned—the fountain. Not only that, but almost opposite the gate there was the white, three-storeyed house with the balconies, where he'd been brought up. Now let Skaliga say he was a German! With deep relief, I went into the house and knocked at the first door.

During the next hour I called at every flat in the building, asking particularly to speak to any old people. It must, I realised, be nearly forty years since Raczinski had lived and played here, but any man or woman of sixty or more might recall a Raczinski family. It needed luck—a lot of luck—and in fact no one did. Well, at least I'd seen the garden.

I thought I might as well try the block next door. There I had an unexpected break. A room in one of the top flats was occupied by a very old man—a Pole, but Russian-speaking—who had lived in the neighbourhood for over fifty years and in that house for thirty. I told him of my search. I described what I thought Raczinski might have looked like as a boy. I said he'd been an active boy who used to play a great deal in the garden opposite.

The old man gave me a puzzled look. " But, *gospodeen*," he said, " there was no garden at that time. All this was a brickfield. It was not until just before the war that the garden was made. I should know, for I helped to make it . . ."

I travelled back to Moscow in a mood of anger and dismay. My doubts about Raczinski were no longer balanced by a lingering

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personal trust. All I knew was that he'd lied to me, deliberately and brazenly, and that was enough.

I thought of Marya. Whatever her father had done, I couldn't believe that she knew. I had such a clear and vivid picture of her in the days of our happiness. Perhaps, I thought, in my growing desperation, she wasn't Raczinski's daughter at all. Perhaps he'd taken her along with him, hoping that the company of a child would help him to get into England.

I continued to mull over facts and theories all the way to Moscow. The only thing I knew for certain was that I'd never rest now until I'd established the truth—and that there was only one way to do it. The moment I reached Arbat I rang the Nark and asked for a meeting with Pavlov . . .

Pavlov's manner, when we met, was distinctly cool at first. I guessed he'd had a report on me—and I was right. " I understand from Intourist," he said, " that you've been visiting Lvov."

" I was making a few more inquiries about Stefan Raczinski."

" In Lvov? What took you there? "

" Raczinski told me he was born in Lvov and lived there."

" I see. This followed, I imagine, your unsettling talk with Pavel Alexandrovitch Skaliga."

I smiled grimly. " I thought we'd discovered all the mikes in Arbat. Obviously we hadn't."

" That, Lord Quainton, I take to be a joke. Skaliga went to the authorities after he had sobered up and told them of the conversation he'd had with you. If I'd thought for a moment he'd be such a useful witness, I'd have had him along instead of Lutkin. So what did you discover in Lvov? "

" That Raczinski lied to me," I said. " He didn't live there."

I explained about the garden, at some length.

" Yes, I see. A rather bad oversight on his part . . . So what are your feelings about him now, Lord Quainton? Do you still think he was not guilty of the crime for which he was sentenced? "

" I desperately want to, but I find it very difficult."

Pavlov nodded. " My own view, after we saw Lutkin, was that the position was open, as you know. Now there seems to be no doubt whatever—and I'm sorry. The problem for you must be a distressing one. Have you any idea what you will do? "

" Yes," I said. " I'm going back to England. I'd be glad if you could fix up my exit visa as soon as possible."

" Of course, if you wish it. Your paper will make no difficulties?"

" At the moment, I hardly care. I must get the truth from Raczinski, once and for all."

Pavlov gave an understanding nod. " I can see that this business has upset you very much, Lord Quainton. I would say only this—that a daughter does not necessarily take after her father . . . Goodbye, Lord Quainton. I will see that you have your exit visa within twenty-four hours."

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I dropped in at Intourist on my way from the Nark and ordered my air ticket to London. When I got back to Arbat just before five, I retired to my room to pack and mentally draft the service cable I'd send to the office. I finally decided on the simplest possible version: REGRET RETURNING FORTHWITH URGENT PERSONAL MATTER QUAINTON. Cole wouldn't be pleased, but I'd be paying my own fare, and I might well be back in Moscow in a week.

At nine o'clock, the phone rang. It was Nina Alexandrovna calling me from the Nark. They worked all hours at that place.

"Lord Quainton, your exit visa has come through."

"Good—thank you, Nina. I'll collect it in the morning."

"This evening, also, we received the authorisation for your Ukraine trip. Do you wish to cancel it?"

"Oh, lord! That *would* have to happen."

"Mr. Pavlov asked me to say that the trip is all arranged and the itinerary is the one you suggested. We were waiting only for the authorisation. He wondered if perhaps you would prefer to make the trip first and then go to England."

I hesitated. "If I did, when would I leave?"

"According to the schedule, the day after tomorrow, in the morning. Mr. Pavlov asked me to say he does not wish to influence you in any way, but it may not be easy to arrange the trip again this winter. A great deal of preparatory work has been done."

"Yes, I appreciate that. Nina, I'll ring you back."

I hung up, and sat by the phone in gloomy thought. I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to see Raczinski and have it out with him, quickly. I wanted to get things straightened out with Marya, one way or the other. For the moment I'd lost all interest in the damned trip. Yet I didn't see how I could pass it up. Cole would never forgive me. After all, I was supposed to be a newspaperman. The showdown with Raczinski could perfectly well keep for a month. As for Marya, there was probably no future for us now anyway. It seemed to me I had no real choice.

I phoned Nina, and said I'd go.

I was much too busy next day to think any more about Raczinski. I'd done one trip before in December and in spite of the tactful compliment I'd paid Pavlov about the way he organised things, I knew very well what could happen. The boiler of your train could ice up, or the train could get stuck in a drift. You could run short of food, drink and tobacco unless you kept a close eye on your own supplies. And you could be very, very cold.

I looked after the last point first. I managed to borrow from a colleague a tremendous sheepskin *shuba*, the sort that night watchmen were sometimes issued with. It had a huge collar that turned up well above the head, it was drawn in tightly at the waist and neck to keep the wind out, and it had a full skirt that almost swept the ground. It was so large that at night it would make the perfect blanket. That, with my own fur hat, a pair of fleece-lined gloves, and, of course, *valinki*, should take care of the cold.

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Then there was the question of supplies. Russian hospitality on trips was magnificent, but you often had to wait for it. Russians are like camels—they stoke up, and then keep going. I'm not—I get hungry. So I dug out the old kitbag I use on these occasions and stuffed it generously with a well-tried selection of food—rye bread, fat bacon, pressed caviare and chocolate. I also put in a half litre of vodka, a filled water bottle and a change or two of underclothes. I made sure I had my passport and Press card, a torch, a book to read, a map of the Ukraine, a wallet of roubles and a fat notebook, and I was all set.

In the afternoon I went to the Nark and met the man who was to accompany me on the trip as guide and watchdog. His name was Andrei Korzhenko. He was a big, broad-faced Ukrainian of about forty—genial, but impressively tough. He spoke English, not very well but with enthusiasm. He could have been a Nark minion, but I thought he was more likely to be from Security. He shook hands warmly, and together we went over the route.

We would go first to one or two collective farms in the heart of the Ukrainian steppe, because the weather was getting more severe each day and the sooner we were through that part of the programme the better. From there we would work back to Kiev, continue down to the Donetz basin, calling at Krivoi Rog; and finish up at Odessa on the Black Sea.

Korzhenko checked that I had suitable clothing, told me with a grin that if I forgot everything else I should remember vodka, and arranged to meet me at the airport at ten o'clock next morning. Before I left, Pavlov wished me a good journey.

It seemed appropriate that a trip designed to test winter efficiency should start with a forced change of plan because of the weather. At eight in the morning Korzhenko rang me to say the met. report from the airfield we'd been going to fly to was very bad, and that we would have to go by train instead. The railhead would be a place called Glubni, about a hundred miles east of Kiev. A car picked me up shortly after midday and by two o'clock we were trundling south in a train that was patently no crack express.

We had a compartment to ourselves and we conversed pretty solidly at first, exchanging personal details and getting to know something about each other. Korzhenko told me he was originally from Poltava, where his father had been a blacksmith. He said he understood I was a lord and the son of a lord, and what did it feel like? I said it probably felt very much like being the son of a blacksmith. He was interested in my job, and I talked freely about it. I was interested in his, but he talked less freely about it. His geniality, I soon discovered, was spasmodic.

The five-hundred-mile journey was like any other train journey, only slower. At intervals, a rather slovenly-looking *provodnik* brought us tea. There was no restaurant car and we ate when we felt like it. Korzhenko had his supplies in a cloth-covered attaché

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case. His choice of food was similar to mine, except that he had a taste for pickled herring. He had brought vodka, too, but he drank sparingly. So did I.

At ten o'clock the *provodnik* made up our beds, and we turned in. I lay for a while, thinking about the questions I would raise at the collective farms, thinking a little about Marya and the mess we were in. Then I dropped off.

In the morning, the weather had worsened. Snow was flaking down from a lowering sky and we had to have lights on in the compartment. The view through the windows was mostly flat, and dismally grey, with stark patches of birch here and there but little else to break the monotony. It was nearly three in the afternoon when we finally reached Glubni.

There, it soon became apparent that our enforced change of plan had not been adequately reported from Moscow. Whoever was supposed to meet us at the station hadn't turned up. Korzhenko went off to telephone. When he returned, he said, "Tonight we will have to stay in Glubni. However, there is no need to worry—a car is coming and we will soon find a hotel."

We went into the station buffet, which was filthy, and drank tea out of dirty glasses, and talked about the Ukraine. After an hour a car arrived. There was a short sotto voce discussion between Korzhenko and the chauffeur, and we then drove to a miserable shack of a hotel which was reached by climbing a rickety flight of outside wooden stairs. Our welcome there was far from warm.

The *hozyain*, a dark little rat of a man, said at first that he had no room for us. He got short shrift from Korzhenko, who seized him by the throat, shook him, and told him to make room—which he did. Later he produced some thin *borsch* and *kasha* which at least was hot. As soon as we'd eaten, Korzhenko went off on another of his planning missions. He was in a better humour when he returned. "All is arranged," he said. "Tomorrow we go to Novi Gorod."

Before we slept, Korzhenko wedged the back of a chair under the handle of the bedroom door. "This is not a good place," he said, as though he'd made a discovery. But the night proved uneventful—except for the bugs, which bit voraciously.

The morning dawned bright and clear, with a pale blue sky. My spirits rose—all the more when Korzhenko announced that there was no proper road to Novi Gorod and that we were going by sledge. A sledge journey was something I'd always hankered after, but had never managed to achieve. "Sixty-three kilometres," he said. "Four hours. The perfect day for it. We start at nine."

Surprisingly, we did. The two-horse vehicle, driven by a peasant *izvostchik*, was waiting outside at five minutes to nine. The driver was an old man of ravaged appearance, with zigzag ears and a nibbled nose where the frost had got at him. The sledge was broad and stoutly made of wood and iron, with heavy metal runners—a relic of a passing age. We tucked ourselves well in

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under a thick skin rug, our *valinki* wedged against our luggage, our collars up and ear-flaps down. The *izvostchik* shouted something to the horses that sounded like " *Hotyar!* " and we were off.

It was a bumpy ride over the uneven snow of the town, but as soon as we emerged into the open plain the motion became smooth and comfortable. Except for the hiss of the runners and the muffled sound of the horses' hoofs, our passage was noiseless. The steppe, in the early morning light, looked breathtakingly beautiful. The snow, clean and sparkling, lay in narrow wind-blown ridges, like the ridges of sand on a seashore. They were yellow on one side in the sunlight, purple on the other in the shadow, giving a lovely " shot " effect. The still air glittered with myriads of ice crystals that pleasantly pricked our faces. I had rarely felt so exhilarated.

There was no proper road through the white expanse, and in places the track was almost obliterated by recent snow. " *Prostor!* " Korzhenko said, with a great sweep of his arm. It was the word the Russians use to describe the limitless space of their country. Korzhenko sounded as proud as though he'd personally created it. " We'd been going nearly two hours when I caught a whiff of wood smoke on the dry air. A mile farther on we came to a tiny settlement—a typical steppe settlement, Korzhenko said. Its colour-washed houses built of baked earth, had rounded igloo-like roofs and floors sunk several feet into the ground, so that passing by we could see right down into the rooms.

The first thrill of the journey had now passed and the second half was a bit wearing. A wind had got up—faint, but sharp as a razor cut. Soon my eyes began to run, and the tears froze on my cheeks. I could feel the hairs in my shrinking nostrils stiff with ice. My toes, however much I wriggled them in the spacious air pockets of the felt *valinki*, were slowly growing numb. So were my gloved hands. Korzhenko pulled his coat collar closer round his ears and agreed that it was cold. But we got through without suffering anything worse than discomfort. By one o'clock we had by-passed the little town of Novi Gorod and were driving under a tatty wooden arch with a red banner nailed to it extolling the virtues of collective labour, and the words, *Kolkhoz named after Lenin* on a board beside it.

That afternoon, with introductions over and a substantial buffet luncheon out of the way, I started my work with the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and the heads of the various farm sections. They told me stories of the thermometer dropping to forty below, of careless fingers skinned at the touch of metal, of warning flags flying when it was too dangerous for children to go to school. Then we got down to real business.

Korzhenko, who had soon tired of the discussion and had quietly disappeared, returned in the evening in good time for a tremendous banquet, which was attended by various Party and civic officials.

Next day I was taken on a tour of inspection of the collective's

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broad estates, in a lorry that had to have a fire lit underneath it before it would start. I was shown potato clamps and grain stores, cowsheds and piggeries, and was given another enormous meal. Then Korzhenko took over again. With farewells that bordered on the emotional, we set off in a *kolkhoz* car for our next railhead.

It was a remarkable station. It consisted of a small wooden waiting-room beside a single track, in an empty desert of steppe.

The waiting-room was packed with men, women, children and bundles—peasant families on the move. It was a pretty squalid scene and the stench was awful. But it was the only warm place for miles around, and Korzhenko and I squeezed in with the rest and sat down on the floor to wait. In fact, we waited all night.

Dawn came, but the train didn't. By now I was getting very tired of the place—but that dawn was a spectacle I wouldn't have missed. The sun came up above the firm line of the horizon as a clear red ball. A silver crescent of moon faded in the west. Then, in a matter of seconds, the expanse of virgin snow around me turned a deep scarlet. It was like standing in the centre of a lake of icy fire. I enthused to Korzhenko, but he only grunted. I gathered later that he considered it a portent of bad weather.

The train arrived at nine. Our destination was Krasnaya Tserkov, three hours away. We were so late getting there that all Korzhenko's careful arrangements had been upset, and he had to start telephoning. I nibbled some chocolate and took a look around. The station wasn't quite as isolated as the one we'd left. Away in the distance I could see the dome of a church. Near the station entrance, three peasant women with baskets had set up a small informal market. I admired their hardiness. The weather was deteriorating. The sky was clouded, and a raw wind blew.

I went back into the waiting-room and Korzhenko joined me. He expected a car. Dusk fell, and we were still waiting. The transport arrived at six—a decrepit station waggon with a visibly reluctant chauffeur. He said it was going to be a bad night for a drive, and couldn't we put up somewhere till morning? I thought it was a good idea, but Korzhenko, way behind with his schedule, was anxious to get through to the next *kolkhoz*.

We travelled over a " corduroy " road—a narrow strip of pine logs laid crosswise on the bare ground. It had a treacherous coating of snow and ice and an intolerably bumpy surface that sent us bounding to the roof every few seconds. Presently it began to snow. It wasn't the soft snow we'd had before, but a dry, whirling powder that obscured the view. At first the fall was light, but as the wind strengthened, drifts began to form.

I could hear the chauffeur grumbling to Korzhenko. He kept on muttering, and saying that we ought to turn while we could and drive back to Krasnaya Tserkov in our tracks. But Korzhenko wouldn't hear of it: our tracks would be already covered—going back would be as difficult as going on.

So we fought our way on, skidding and sliding, and the snow got

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worse. The drifts were getting deeper; visibility was negligible. Only the bumps told us we were still on the road. Suddenly the wipers packed up. I had a brief glimpse of a copse of birch trees on the left before the windscreen grew opaque. Then the car lurched, shot off the corduroy, and buried itself to the axles in a drift. One look from the outside told us there was no hope of getting it out on our own.

It was the chauffeur, peering through the flying powder, who spotted the pipe—a concrete pipe, nearly three feet in diameter, lying on the surface of the ground at right angles to the road. Beyond it we discovered another one, not joined—and another. Evidently some major constructional work was under way. Korzhenko, telling us to wait, set off through the copse with a torch, following the line of pipes.

We waited, backs to the wind, stamping our feet. We both knew the position was pretty grim. At best, it seemed, we should have to spend a freezing night in the car, and the way the storm was developing we might well be buried by morning . . .

Then Korzhenko emerged from the wood. " It's all right," he called cheerfully, " there's a building. Bring your things."

We set off in the tracks he'd made, the chauffeur following close behind. The pipes ran on through the little wood and out into the open again. Ahead, I could see the loom of the building. It proved to be a single large room built of sectional concrete slabs, put up, I guessed, for the convenience of the workers on the pipe job. Beyond it was a wooden latrine hut. The building was locked and there was no sign of life.

Korzhenko put his shoulder to the door and at the second heave the lock broke. We went in, flashing torches. The room had two long rows of trestle tables, with wooden chairs for about forty men. Off it there was a little annexe—a kitchen. Naked electric light bulbs dangled from the ceiling.

Korzhenko clicked a switch, but nothing happened. He nosed around the kitchen, found the main switch and threw it. Still nothing happened. He looked in the box beside it and grunted. " It's the fuse," he said. We searched around for wire and the chauffeur pulled a rusty piece from an old crate. Korzhenko looked dubious, and tried it. The room blazed with light.

He grinned at me. " We're in luck," he said. " Allow me to welcome you to the best hotel for miles."

We were, indeed, in luck. There was a big stove in the centre of the room and sufficient wood stored beside it to keep us warm throughout the night. There was no water supply—a row of birchwood buckets hanging in the kitchen suggested some outside source—but we had plenty of snow to melt. There was no telephone, and as operations at the site seemed to have been suspended for the winter, there'd be no workers to call on. However, that problem could be dealt with when the time came.

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The chauffeur, quite amiable now, chopped some kindling and lit the stove. When it was blazing merrily we all had a shot of vodka and a *zakuska* of bread and garlic sausage from Korzhenko's supplies, followed a little later by a more substantial meal and quarts of hot tea. The room, with its double windows, warmed up rapidly. Our satisfaction grew as the blizzard outside became audibly worse. We had had a close shave.

Before settling down for the night I put on my outdoor things and paid a visit to the lavatory hut. The shock of the cold outside made me gasp; in that swirling white world, clothes seemed a feeble shield. The room lights threw a helpful glow around.

All the same, those thirty yards were no fun. Neither were the primitive facilities of the hut. But at least it offered some cover.

When I opened the door to leave, I saw with dismay that the building was in darkness again. The rusty fuse wire must have failed. I shone my torch ahead, but it proved a hindrance rather than a help—the beam showed nothing but an opaque curtain of driving snow. I shone it down on the ground, thinking I'd retrace my own steps. After a yard or two I could see no marks at all. My flat-bottomed *valinki* had left only the faintest traces, and the whirling powder snow had already obscured them.

I stood for a moment in the slashing wind, trying to remember where the building had been in relation to the hut. A little to the left, I thought. I peered ahead, but could see absolutely nothing. I groped my way forward. I took another half dozen steps—and plunged into a drift. By the time I'd got myself out of it, I'd lost my bearings altogether. Where the hell was I?

I stood and shouted. A faint shout came back—but in that howling blizzard it was hard to judge its direction. I tried again. On my way to the hut I'd had the snow at my back, now if I faced it I ought to reach the building. I plodded on for twenty paces. I knew I was off beam because of the depth of snow, but I didn't think the building could be far away. I shouted again, with the full power of my lungs. This time there was no response at all.

I had no illusions now about the danger I was in. The building was a mere speck in the vastness of the steppe and the chance that I would stumble across it by accident was negligible. But if I didn't find it, and had to spend the night in the open, I'd almost certainly perish. I fought down my rising panic and tried to consider the situation calmly. The building, I told myself, *must* be near. Any moment now, the light would come on. I'd see the glow, and I'd be all right. But in the meantime I couldn't stand still or I'd freeze in my tracks. The best course seemed to be to walk in a tight circle and watch for the light.

I stumbled on, bearing always a little to the left. The wind was rising, the curtain of snow becoming denser. The sharp crystals whipped painfully against my face. Breathing was difficult. Every few yards I fell into a drift. Slowly, I began to tire—and worse, to lose heart. By now the light must surely be on again;

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I was too far away to see it, that was all. Mechanically, I plodded on. I was hopelessly lost—but to stop was to die.

I don't know how long I kept going. I know only that I was near to exhaustion when I suddenly blundered into something hard. I shone my torch down. It was one of the concrete pipes. At once hope surged through me. If I followed the line of the pipes, I must surely reach either the building or the car. In either case, I'd be safe. I struggled on with new vigour. But I'd reckoned without the drifts. They were so deep now that in places the pipes were buried and I was in danger of losing them. Time and again I sank to my armpits in the soft snow. Every step was a battle. I'd never make it . . .

There seemed only one hope. I chose a pipe that was blocked with snow at one end and almost blocked at the other, and crawled in as far as I could go. The relief was indescribable. Out of the driving blizzard I felt almost comfortable again. There was no draught in the pipe, no moving air at all. In a little while the storm might abate, then I'd be able to see the lights of the building. I tied my ear-flaps under my chin, pulled the high collar of my *shuba* round my head, drew my feet up under its skirts, and lay down.

I shall never forget that night—that long, long night. The storm didn't slacken. Slowly, the cold crept through me. I stirred often, changing my position, working my toes, my legs, my arms, in the narrow circumference of the pipe. I crawled up and down repeatedly on my hands and knees, trying to keep the circulation going. I found a slab of chocolate in my pocket and munched a piece at carefully timed intervals. Repeatedly, I looked at my watch. The hours dragged as no hours had ever dragged before. Finally I became so cold and wretched that I hardly cared what happened. Towards the morning I dozed from sheer exhaustion.

I was aroused by voices. I was so cramped and stiff that I could hardly move. I raised my head painfully from the concrete and looked along the pipe. Through the gap in the snow I could see dawn was breaking. I crawled towards the entrance. It had stopped snowing and the wind had dropped. Everything was very still. I looked out. The building was no more than a stone's throw away!

Korzhenko and the chauffeur were standing in front of it, gazing around. They seemed curiously unperturbed. I was on the point of scrambling out and angrily demanding why they weren't searching for me when I heard words that froze me more than the night had done.

"He's dead, all right . . ." It was the chauffeur's voice, clear in the still air. "No-one could have survived."

"I shouldn't think so," Korzhenko replied. "We'll have to find him, though. My instructions were to take his body back to Moscow. He can't be far away. It worked well, comrade. The perfect accident."

The Ashes of Loda © Andrew Garve 1964, 1965

Next month: the Last Part of Moscow Assignment

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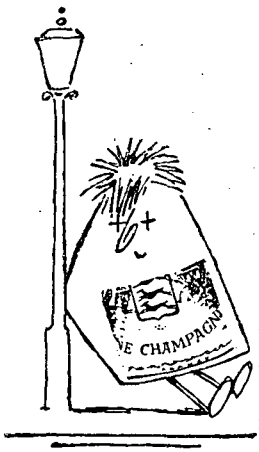
Champagne and other sparkling wines are associated almost automatically with parties and celebrations; weddings; anniversaries and so on. They are, of course, the obvious wines for such occasions because of their gay appearance and stimulating effect, but they are well suited to many others. Some regard 11.30 a.m. as the perfect time for a glass of champagne, others say six o'clock in the evening. One school of thought holds that it can be enjoyed to the full as an aperitif, another that it reaches perfection with a suitable sweet, such as a soufflé or certain fruits. The Germans like to put a peach into a balloon glass and pour a sparkling hock over it.



Another idea that dies hard is that champagne and sparkling wines are expensive in relation to other wines. The answer is that they are not so expensive as certain vintage wines, and used as party wines they go farther than other drinks. The prices of champagne range from about 22s. per bottle for a sound non-vintage wine, quite suitable for parties—to round about 50s. for the finest of the vintage wines. Most wine merchants have a brand of non-vintage wine from one of the lesser known champagne houses in the lowest price range, and these wines are a safe buy. So far as the vintage wines from the famous houses are concerned, the 1955 wines are becoming increasingly difficult to find and are being

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replaced by those of 1959. A vintage champagne is a blend of one year, and non-vintage of several years. Champagne is shipped when it is five years old, and remains at its best for a further five years.

Sparkling wines do not pretend to vie with champagne; many of them have borrowed from Epernay the champagne method of making, but it has been established in the courts that in the United Kingdom and France, it is illegal to describe them as champagne.

The producers of sparkling wines include France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia and Russia.

Britain makes a sparkling wine from imported French grape juice. The price range for imported sparkling wines is from about 15s. to 23s. per bottle.

From the Bordeaux region comes Veuve de Vernay, selling at a little over 14s. per bottle; from Burgundy there is Cristal Dry, 17s., the pink Oeil de Perdrix, 18s. 9d. and the red sparkling Burgundy, 18s. 9d.

Two districts in the Loire produce very good sparkling wines of exceptional quality and the sparkling Vouvray, 19s. 9d. is especially to be commended.

The Rhône produces a sparkling Blanc de Blancs wine, an indication, as with champagne, that it is made entirely from white grapes.

The Germans, who drink some 75 million bottles a year of Sekt, or sparkling wines, have put several on the British market; Deinhard's and Henkell-Trocken are the best-known shippers, with prices ranging from about 15s. to 23s. and are well worth the money.

Italy's best known sparkling wine is the sweet Asti Spumante, 19s., and Nebbiolo, 14s., for those who like red.

Spain sends Perelada, 19s. and Don Perico at about the same price.

Australia has six sparkling wines on sale in Britain, ranging from 15s. 3d. for Gramps Orlando Barossa Rose Pearl, to 26s. for Seppelt's Great Western Imperial Reserve.

It is important to remember that, though the methods of manufacture are often similar, champagne and sparkling wines are two very different things when it comes to taste. There is no substitute for champagne, which is unique, and at its best, magnificent.

But there are alternatives, and though none of them aspire to greatness, they are nonetheless pleasant.

J.B.W.

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bookshelf

Two people, Dan Tyler Moore and Martha Waller have written a sort of everyman's treatise called **Cloak and Cipher** and it turns out to be splendidly interesting as well as informative. Especially attractive, I should imagine, to those with a mathematical turn of mind which this reviewer hasn't!

Secret writing, ciphers and codes were in use, it appears, even before the days of Julius Caesar—who made great use of this means of private communication. His particular kind of code was simple enough by later standards, but seems to have been successful. But many codes failed in their purpose—being easily broken, often with disastrous results.

One such was used by that foolish plotter, Anthony Babington, in his ill-fated correspondence to Mary of Scotland. And when the famous Casket letters fell into the hands of Walsingham they were quickly decoded and finally decided Elizabeth that the only safe way of handling her rival cousin was to have her beheaded; a warning that if you must use a code, make sure it's good!

More successful was Louis, the Sun King of France. He used a secret form of writing devised for him by a brilliant mathematician who possessed positively uncanny skill at both inventing and deciphering.

The King's special code was known to his infuriated enemies as the Great Cipher and was never unscrambled by even the best of their experts. Indeed, when the secret died with Louis, it was not until almost two hundred years later that another Frenchman managed to unravel its mysteries.

And so through the years to the Nazi war, and on to the cold war of today when both America and Russia have brought all sorts of cloak and dagger activities, including the craft of secret writing, to a very fine art indeed.

An unusual subject and a most readable book. (Harrap 21s.)

What unexpected pleasure to find two clever, out of the ordinary, extremely exciting thrillers in one month, both by little-known authors. **Let's Kill Uncle** is Rohan Grady's third novel, the first two if I remember rightly, both being "costume." It concerns two horrid children, Barnaby and Christie, who are

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spending the summer holiday on a small and pleasant island, watched over by handsome dim-witted Sergeant Coulter of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Even more horrid than the children is Barnaby's uncle, Major Sylvester Murchison-Gaunt, an ex-commando, who carries in his luggage a piano-wire garrotte with teak handles which has seen much use.

Uncle likes money and is heir to his wealthy and orphaned young nephew.

Barnaby, who has recognised his uncle's sinister plans for his early death, confides in Christie, who sensibly suggests the only reasonable course of action is to get rid of Uncle first.

A truly wonderful blend of humour and horror.

(Longmans 18s.)

It would be difficult to find a nastier beginning than the opening chapter of John D. MacDonald's **The End of the Night.**

This is a letter supposedly written by one Willy, a prison officer, to his friend Ed.

He describes in detail not only the execution of " the Wolf Pack " murderers, three men and one woman, but the rehearsal leading up to this grisly business in a quasi what-jolly-fun-this-is manner which is peculiarly sick-making. After the letter, comes the revolting story of the gang and their victims—one of whom is a young bride—told through their different eyes.

Grim, powerful and well enough written. (Robert Hale 12s. 6d.)

Next comes **Make Your Stories Sell** by D'Arcy Niland, who has followed his own advice successfully enough to win numerous literary prizes all over the world, including the highly sought after " New York Herald Tribune " award.

Perhaps his best known novel here is The Shiralee, praised by the critics as " tough, colourful and quite wonderful."

There is of course no quick and easy recipe for writing worthwhile fiction, nor are there tricks of the trade likely to keep the rejection slips away from the door. But D'Arcy Niland gives both sound and amusing advice from his own vast experience and this book is strongly recommended reading for all would-be authors. (Michael Joseph 15s.)

Shortly before he died Hesketh Pearson finished correcting the proofs of a collection of pithy biographies, **Extraordinary People,** who were just that!

Most of us, I suspect, will turn first to the pages about the " rebel artist," Frank Harris, whose (amoral) Life was reissued lately amid much excited talk and comment.

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This chapter is illustrated by a splendid photograph, taken in 1914, of Harris himself, immaculate in silk hat, morning suit and rolled umbrella, in the custody of the Tipstaff on his way to Brixton Prison.

Among many others included, are Anna Seward; "Mystery Man" Wilkie Collins; Henry Fielding (I wonder what he would make of that film Tom Jones!); Bernard Shaw and Dr. Erasmus Darwin.

You'll find it fascinating. (Heinemann 30s.)

With **The Reckoning**, the Rt. Hon. The Earl of Avon, K.G., P.C., M.C., completes his memoirs.

They cover the years from when, as Anthony Eden, he resigned as Foreign Secretary in 1938—to the end of the war.

For most of this narrative, the story belongs as much to his chief, Sir Winston Churchill, as to the Earl of Avon himself. Their lives could not have been more closely merged in these years of desperate struggle.

This book is an intimate and wholly absorbing chapter of our history—and something those of us who have sons, will want to have and keep. (Cassell 42s.)

Another discovery is **A Hive of Glass** by P. M. Hubbard, a new name to me though he has two previous novels listed. His publishers very rightly describe his writing as witty and stylish, and he tells an oddly sinister tale of quiet violence against a background of antique dealers and their reaction to the startling news of the existence of a rare and priceless piece of Elizabethan glass; owner and whereabouts unknown.

Original, and absorbing to the thriller addict and non-addict alike. (Michael Joseph 18s.)

In paperbacks, the **Time Off** series is just the reading for a winter month—looking ahead to the sun and the warmth; to the countryside and beautiful cities and such delectable places as the Loire Valley, Rome, Venice and Florence, Portugal, the Italian Lakes, Greece.

These appeared recently in the *Observer* and are now collected in this permanent handy form. The advice about routes, hotels, currency and so on, is sound and unbiased. A pleasant change this, meant for pockets such as yours and mine, rather than for those of the millionaire class.

For those who like travelling nearer home the series covers Scotland, Devon and Cornwall. (Hodder Paperbacks 2s. 6d.)

J.D.

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man about cars

It must be over two years since I last tested the **Austin Healey Sprite.** I remember thinking it great fun for dashing about. But the ride was what the English call " firm " and anyone else, including Americans who make up 80 per cent of the market, call distinctly uncomfortable. My other criticism was its performance. Nothing is more frustrating than tailing Grandad in his family saloon when one is driving a sporty car that is too slow to get past him.

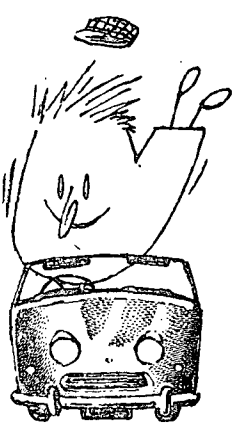
Both these criticisms, and many others, I have found well corrected in the latest version of this popular little car.

On first sight it looks much the same but somehow less cluttered. I came to the conclusion that this is due almost entirely to the removal of the unpleasant-looking detachable side screens with their nasty little sliding windows, and the substitution of neat-looking, wind-up windows. The cockpit has been improved in layout and restyled, making it smarter and much more comfortable, though still somewhat cramped. This is not a car for six-footers, unless they have been already trained in a mini.

The test car took some time to warm up from cold and throughout the test, was a little rough at low revs. Once warm and with revs kept over the 2,000 mark, it proved a very brisk little car.

Modification to the breathing and a higher compression ratio have raised maximum power to 59 b.h.p. at 5,750 r.p.m.

A crisp but not too noisy exhaust, a fairly high revving and basically smooth engine enable one to cruise for lengthy periods at 75 to 80 m.p.h. without fatigue. With the aid of ½ elliptic springs at the rear in place of the old ¼ elliptics, the ride is much smoother and the handling much improved.



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The tail is now less inclined to wander off on its own on bumpy or wet surfaces.

Much of the test was carried out in adverse weather conditions. Heavy rain and thick fog with its resulting dirt is not the best way to test a car.

In foggy conditions the windscreen washers were absolutely essential and would have been equally useful on the headlights which became steadily dimmer and dimmer. To my annoyance, I was forced to stop and wipe them over on more than one occasion, although the diffused light made quite a good substitute for a fog light!

The windscreen also proved to be a trial. Whether it is the lowness of the car or the flatness of the screen, I don't know, but for quite long periods I had to get my passenger to operate the washer continually to enable me to use both my hands for driving.

The same dirty conditions also emphasised a fault I have found on another car from the same stable. The wipers are offset too far to the left so that one has to sit on the skew to see out clearly. Three wipers if possible would be the real answer to this problem.

But once one has acquired concertina-type legs, and remembers to study the sky for any storm clouds, the Sprite quickly endears itself.

It has enough performance to shoot past a high proportion of road users.

Journeys become noticeably shorter with a very crisp gear change—0 to 50 m.p.h. in 9.9 seconds—and a top speed of around 92 m.p.h.

Also, unlike previous models, the steering is more precise and the Sprite tested was fitted with a hard top, fairly easy to fit or remove and reasonably weather and draught proof—though not entirely. The normal folding hood proved as easy or difficult as most of the others that I have encountered in my motoring life. I have no doubt that one day some bright boy will discover a simple, good-looking, durable, weatherproof, etc. etc. type hood.

All in all a sturdy, safe and likeable car which in most respects does credit to B.M.C. development engineers. The Sprite is well able to hold its own in the hurly-burly of our roads and at £612 inc. p.t. plus £48 odd for a hard top, one could do far worse. Undoubtedly a car such as this will do well in overseas markets, as well as those here at home.

K.F.

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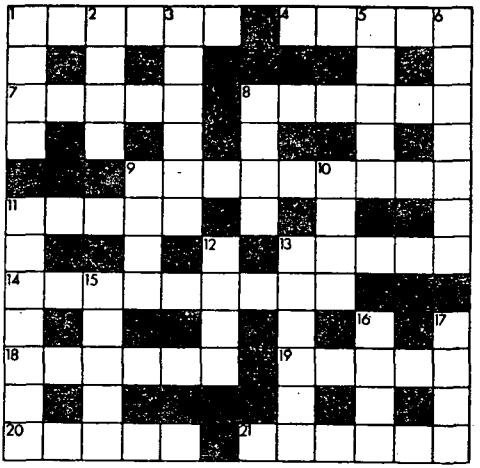
TEN MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Shady doze (6).
4 Frankly, all talk! (5).
7 Young ox (5).
8 Whirlpool (6).
9 Shoulder-belt (9).
11 Strong porter? (5).
13 Decree (5).
14 Defoe's factotum ? (3, 6).
18 Remarkable in code? (6).
19 Lukewarm (5).
20 Spruce (5).
21 Privileged lag (6).

DOWN

1 Not bad (2-2).
2 Garden for two? (4).
3 Basis for blackmail (6).
5 Loose (5).
6 American dance (7).
8 See the Latin! (4).
9 Dull yellow (4).
10 Gentlewoman (4).
11 Messina (anag.) (7).
12 Water-lung? (4).
13 Joyful spring festival (6).
15 The dark (5).
16 Work for players! (4).
17 He whirls around! (4).

(Solution on page 123)

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD (FEB. ISSUE)

Across. 1, *Astronomer.* 9, *Apiece.* 10, *Bloomsbury.* 11, *Ostend.* 12, *Satin.* 15, *Haydn.* 18, *Anise.* 19, *Intuits.* 20, *Gorge.* 21, *Stilt.* 22, *Chalice.* 23, *Anode.* 24, *Tenor.* 27, *Myall.* 30, *Doodle.* 31, *The Tempest.* 32, *Regina.* 33, *Lutestring.*
Down. 2, *Selima.* 3, *Rooted.* 4, *Noses.* 5, *Mount.* 6, *Rayon.* 7, *Television.* 8, *Dead letter.* 13, *Actuary.* 14, *Initial.* 15. *High and dry.* 16, *Yarborough.* 17, *Niece.* 18, *Asset.* 25, *Eloper.* 26, *Orison.* 27, *Metal.* 28, *Agent.* 29, *Leeds.*

SOLUTION TO THE PUZZLE ON PAGE 99

13. Having mounted 4 and descended 3, he has risen 1. When he has done this 9 times, he has mounted 36 and risen 9. The next 4 steps bring him to the top. There are therefore 13 steps.

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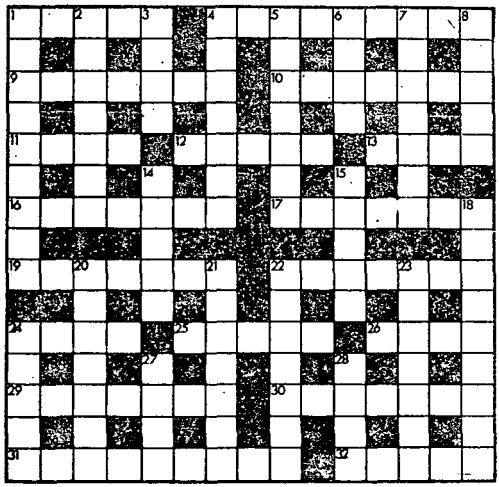
ARGOSY CROSSWORD

Solution next month



ACROSS

1 Name for a herb! (5).

4 With their links they must work together! (5-4).

9 Old leper's cry? (7).

10 What's that you're smoking, old rope? (7).

11 Drinks like fish! (4).

12 " Only putty, brass, an' ——" (Kipling) (5).

13 A grand opening at holy place (4).

16 Book-makers? (7).

17 Dog debt-collecting? That's odd! (7).

19 Penny first makes fruit spotted? (7).

22 Instalment on the TV? (7).

24 Eros make you angry? (4).

25 " The time is out of joint: O cursed —— " (*Hamlet*) (5).

26 Satisfactory source? (4).

29 First class drink brought round with good cigar! (7).

30 Blackout is a name for it (7).

31 What's my line? (9).

32 Tendency to heart-rend? (5).

DOWN

1 Colourful face made him a lady-killer? (9).

2 Old instrument in the bag nevertheless! (7).

3 Told a story in song (4).

4 Women go to ask for the vote? (7).

5 Record of the year? (7).

6 More than one? No! (4).

7 Brisk movement (7).

8 Lizard — one taken from colony (5).

14 Shrub to partner ivy (5).

15 Coach or coaches? (5).

18 Hoop from West Indian players? (5, 4).

20 Perfect diamond, darling! (7).

21 Treble in score (7).

22 Mouth waters! (7).

23 To be foreman abroad, we hear (7).

24 Come to grips with youth (5).

27 Turn pale in court? (4).

28 Stitches help wounds to (4).

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